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New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 8

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences (A/53/298/Add.1)

The Acting President: I should like first to draw the attention of representatives to document A/53/298/Add.1, which contains a letter dated 1 October 1998 addressed to the President of the General Assembly by the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences. As members are aware, the Assembly, in paragraph 7 of its resolution 40/243, decided that no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

As indicated in the letter I have just mentioned, the Committee on Conferences has recommended that the General Assembly authorize the Committee on Information to meet in New York during the main part of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that the General Assembly adopts the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 164 (*continued*)

Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General (A/52/871)

Mr. Mohammed (Ethiopia): Permit me at the outset to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. The report provides a comprehensive and objective analysis of the sources of conflict in Africa, ranging from historical legacies to economic challenges and factors attributable to specific conflict situations. Most important, it examines, at length and with the requisite clarity, the various ways and means at the disposal of the international community and Africa to address conflicts in the continent, and it draws important conclusions and recommendations that require further follow-up and implementation. In this respect, my delegation commends the follow-up actions taken thus far by the Secretary-General and by the Security Council, in particular the holding of the ministerial meeting of the Council on 24 September 1998.

We are also grateful to the President of the General Assembly for giving this matter the attention and the priority it deserves in the deliberations of the Assembly at its current session.

98-86053 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Africa is indeed a vast and varied continent, and the sources of conflict and the challenges it faces reflect in many ways its diversity. But, as the Secretary-General rightly points out in his report, the sources of the challenges and conflicts in Africa are closely interrelated or are linked by a number of common themes and experiences. Inasmuch as the causes of conflict in Africa and the challenges that African countries face are complex and diverse, their solution clearly demands the determined effort of Africa and genuine partnership on the part of the international community.

The past few years have been viewed by many as the beginning of a new era of hope and of African renaissance. Notwithstanding the failures and tragedies, especially in Somalia and Rwanda, the present decade has undoubtedly witnessed important transformations in Africa. Many African countries, including my own, have undertaken far-reaching political and economic reform measures aimed at promoting political pluralism and establishing an environment conducive to a market-oriented economy. Regional cooperation and integration have also gained new dimensions and momentum in Africa, leading to the establishment of the African Economic Community and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. The role and contribution of subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), both in the field of economic integration and in conflict prevention and resolution have also become an important factor for stability and progress in Africa in recent years.

In spite of these laudable accomplishments and our expectations and hopes for the best, developments of the past few months, namely the emergence of new conflicts and the resurgence of old ones in various parts of Africa, have become a serious source of concern and preoccupation. This makes the debate on the report of the Secretary-General and the focus on Africa all the more timely and challenging.

In addressing the sources of conflict in Africa, the Secretary-General rightly refers to historical legacies as one of the factors of conflict in Africa, especially in the context of boundary or territorial disputes. The significance of these legacies and the need for permanent solutions was acknowledged from the very outset by the founding fathers of our regional organization, the OAU, who in their great wisdom and vision declared in 1963 that African countries would accept boundaries inherited at the time of their accession to independence. As rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General, that wisdom and vision of African leaders has proved over the past three and half decades to be indispensable in preventing and resolving conflicts arising from territorial claims in Africa.

More often than not, in situations of border disputes, violations of this sacrosanct principle, accompanied by the use of force, remain the primary source of territorial conflicts in Africa. Needless to say, even in the absence of that principle, it is very clear that international law prohibits the use of force, except in self-defence, as a means of resolving disputes or changing circumstances on the ground.

This explains the cause of the present unfortunate and dangerous situation in the Horn of Africa, and the irresponsible and belligerent behaviour of Eritrea towards its neighbours and its recent aggression against Ethiopia. The present conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea is not just a simple or ordinary bilateral dispute between the two countries. Rather it is the result of aggression committed by Eritrea, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and the principles enshrined in the charters of the United Nations and of the OAU.

The Government of Ethiopia, guided by its unwavering commitment to the peace and development not only of its own people but also of its subregion, has exercised maximum self-restraint in the face of the Eritrean aggression. It has accepted and fully cooperated with the various peace efforts, initiatives and decisions, in particular those of the United States and Rwandan facilitators and the decisions of the OAU and of the Security Council. Eritrea, however, remains defiant in its rejection of these important initiatives and decisions.

It goes without saying that primary responsibility for resolving conflicts in Africa and elsewhere rests in the hands of the parties directly involved. The international community, in particular the United Nations system, and relevant regional and subregional organizations also have a pivotal role not only in facilitating or complementing the efforts of the parties concerned, but also in ensuring respect for the norms and principles of international law, especially when these are so flagrantly violated. Inaction on the part of the international community and appeasement in the face of such violations will only encourage intransigence and set a dangerous precedent with far-reaching consequences for peace and stability. It should be made clear that lasting peace cannot be

achieved at the expense of, or by compromising, principles and norms of international law, or by appeasement of those who engage in irresponsible action.

The Secretary-General highlights in his report various means and methods of responding to conflict situations, and makes important recommendations, some of which have been followed through by the Secretary-General and by the Security Council. In particular, we welcome the measures aimed at enhancing African capacity and preparedness for peacekeeping, as well as the efforts being made to address questions relating to illicit arms transfers and to the implementation of arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council.

One of the important issues raised in the report is the role of external factors in peace efforts and the need for coordination of their actions. In fulfilling the mandate entrusted to it by the OAU and IGAD, Ethiopia has made and continues to make efforts to assist in the resolution of the crisis in Somalia.

Our experience in this regard has clearly shown that parallel initiatives and the lack of coordination among external actors have created obstacles to making an effective impact on the peace process. Therefore, with recognition of the need for coordination of all external forces for durable peace in Somalia, encouraging efforts are now being made to establish a mechanism for harmonizing the policies and actions of external actors. We are confident that the international community, and the United Nations in particular, will provide their support for this endeavour, and we remain actively engaged in the search for peace in Somalia.

Cooperation and coordination of activities between the United Nations and the OAU are essential for the success of efforts to deal with conflict situations in Africa. My delegation wishes in this connection to acknowledge the important measures taken by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to enhance and strengthen the cooperation and coordination between the two organizations.

The tragic victims of violent conflicts in Africa, as in other parts of the world, are often innocent civilians, including children, which makes the humanitarian dimension of conflicts an issue of grave concern to the international community. In most conflict situations in the continent international action has been largely initiated in response to appalling humanitarian tragedies. In all circumstances, however, it should be stressed clearly that respect for the rules and norms of international humanitarian law by all parties to a conflict is not an option, but an imperative. Humanitarian responses and actions need to be undertaken in a coordinated and timely manner and with strict adherence to the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and universality. It is of absolute importance that all the sectors involved in humanitarian activities, including the United Nations system, respect these principles and avoid roles contrary to their mandates, which must remain strictly humanitarian at all times and in all places.

As pointed out in the Secretary-General's report, development is a human right and remains the principal long-term objective of all countries in Africa. Sustainable development is also central to the prospect of conflict prevention and durable peace in Africa. It is clearly evident that to succeed in building frameworks for enduring peace and stability on the African continent, the international community must form genuine partnerships with the African countries to strengthen the continent's social and economic foundations.

In short, while the international community should continue to focus on achieving peace, security and stability, which are so pivotal, it should not ignore the magnitude of the socio-economic challenges confronting the continent, which are real and are at the centre of the issue of peace in the continent.

African countries are cognizant of this stark reality and have undertaken far-reaching economic reforms aimed at revitalizing and transforming their economies. It was hoped that these actions would make Africa an attractive destination for capital and foreign direct investment. Regrettably, these much desired outcomes have largely not materialized. First, the level of external assistance is declining and export earnings are shrinking as commodity prices plummet. Secondly, due to declining domestic resources to finance the necessary social overhead capital, Africa is not able to tap the benefits of the growing global economy.

Africa therefore strongly advocates reforms and calls for globalization that is responsive and sensitive to the situation of the world's weakest economies. This has to be accomplished through increased and carefully targeted official development assistance flows, by opening up markets for commodities of export interest to Africa, by converting official bilateral debts owed by the poorest African countries into grants and by improving the access of people living in poverty to productive opportunity. In this regard, Ethiopia fully endorses the

recommendations of the Secretary-General made at the informal meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Development Assistance Committee countries and reiterated during the ministerial meeting of the Security Council on 24 September 1998. These recommendations rightly highlight priority areas in meeting Africa's economic challenges. We believe that implementation of these recommendations greatly helps mitigate the negative impacts of globalization in Africa. It could also help the efforts of African countries to promote economic growth and development in the continent.

In concluding, let me express the conviction of my delegation that with sufficient political will and determination on the part of all of us — both in Africa and in the international community at large — we will be able to lay a solid foundation for peace and development in Africa as we enter the new millennium.

Mr. Pohan (Indonesia): The delegation of Indonesia considers it both timely and appropriate for the General Assembly to undertake a review and reappraisal of our collective and concerted endeavours to restore peace and stability and enhance prospects for development in the African continent. Our deliberations reflect the continuing concern of the international community over these issues facing Africa and its collective determination to forge a partnership between the continent and the rest of the world to resolve them.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report of 13 April 1998 on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, which contains balanced suggestions between economic and security issues, on the one hand, and internal and international aspects, on the other, and whose implementation would bolster peace and security in the continent. We also support the five priority areas he outlined at the outset of our debate. In our view, the steps to be taken by the Secretariat and United Nations organs on follow-up activities based on these specific proposals contain realistic and achievable goals in mitigating the numerous problems confronting the African countries.

Indonesia reiterates its support for the efforts being made to reach the goals envisioned by the people of Africa, in concert with the position taken by the Non-Aligned Movement in its Final Document adopted in Durban, South Africa. The Movement, while recognizing the recent positive developments in Africa in the socio-economic fields, injected a fresh, new momentum into our continuing endeavours to collectively address the various interlinked issues through a comprehensive and integrated approach.

On the basis of the experience of many Member States, including Indonesia, a recognition of the interrelated nature of peace, security and development against the backdrop of a world that is entering a qualitatively new horizon should lead to the peaceful resolution of disputes which will mitigate the negative impact of globalization that threatens to marginalize the developing countries and further reduce the minimal advantages they enjoy.

As Africa stands poised at the threshold of the next millennium and looks towards the attainment of its goals of stable peace and secure economic prosperity, its abundant natural resources and the innate genius of its people will be a force to be reckoned with in the global economy. However, such a prospect calls for an environment of peace and security, without which development would be impeded. Hence, my delegation views with apprehension the persistence of conflicts in various parts of Africa, resulting in an unconscionable toll in human lives and material devastation. In this regard, we welcome the involvement of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and subregional organizations, and we commend their tireless efforts to resolve disputes peacefully and amicably through dialogue and negotiations, as conflicts in Africa are not amenable to military solutions. There is much that these organizations can achieve through working in concert to remove obstacles that endanger security, and thereby facilitate the peace process. Ultimately, however, it is up to the leaders of Africa to set aside their differences in the larger interests of their peoples and countries. The need of the hour demands no less.

It is pertinent to note that in its presidential statement of 16 September 1998, the Security Council affirmed its intention to take steps consistent with its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and called for the strengthening of Africa's capacity to participate in all aspects of peacekeeping and for increased bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of peacekeeping. Resolution 1197 (1998), adopted by the Council last month, focuses our attention on the need to undertake a series of measures that would contribute to conflict prevention and resolution. Taken together, they would augment Africa's capabilities with regard to both peacekeeping and dealing with conflict situations and thereby contribute to the stability of the continent.

It is also self-evident that in the arduous task of building the essential infrastructure for peace and stability in the African continent, the international community must work together with the African countries in strengthening the continent's economic and social foundations. Poverty and pestilence, illiteracy and hunger breed despair and resentment. Only through sustained economic and social development will people gain a vested interest in working towards peaceful solutions of their differences.

It no longer suffices for the international community to convene and merely engage in perfunctory expressions of empathy and support for the African countries without extending concrete assistance. If indeed there is a genuine desire to prevent humanitarian disaster or to avoid costly peacekeeping operations and peacemaking efforts, then comprehensive, concerted and concrete action on economic development cooperation must be taken. Anything less will cast aspersions on the credibility of the international community's commitment to the cause of Africa. Let me emphasize our full support for the Assembly's endeavours in exercising its jurisdiction and in fulfilling its responsibilities to Africa.

Indonesia's commitment to the people of Africa has in the past been demonstrated by, among other things, its support of African development during its chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement, its participation in such forums as the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s; support for the United Nations Special Initiative on Africa; and bilateral cooperation with a number of African countries.

Finally, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Indonesia convened a High-level Advisory Meeting on the South Summit in Jakarta last August and will convene the forthcoming High-level Meeting on Regional/Subregional Cooperation in Bali from 2 to 4 December of this year, which will pave the way for the next South summit meeting in Cuba prior to the Millennium Assembly in the year 2000 to further intensify South-South cooperation. It is our hope that these processes will help meet the challenges of globalization facing the South, and Africa in particular, and thereby facilitate the integration of the developing countries into the mainstream of the global economy.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*interpretation from French*): As the Security Council has done, the General Assembly is today considering the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

This discussion is important for two reasons. First, it concerns peace and development in Africa and therefore the future of that continent. Given the major challenges posed at the end of this century by economic globalization and technological changes, which themselves give rise to serious concerns about the future of humankind, the African peoples, more than others, are feeling vulnerable. They are turning, full of hope, to our Organization, which has worked so hard for their freedom.

They are expecting these discussions to shed the necessary light to enable us to discern the signs of the times, interpret the complex realities of human existence and provide more humane conditions of life. They are expecting also recommendations conducive to concrete and sustained action.

These deliberations are likewise important because, since they coincide with a twofold fiftieth anniversary — that of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of peacekeeping operations — they bring us to the very raison d'être of the United Nations. Indeed, the peoples of the United Nations created it, *inter alia*, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

The United Nations thus has a mission to promote peace and development, but these efforts are not close to fruition in today's Africa. But with the will and resolve of the African peoples, these goals will be achieved tomorrow with — we hope — the sustained support of the international community. That is what is at stake in these deliberations.

At this stage, allow me to reiterate our most heartfelt congratulations to the Secretary-General on the report, whose clear-sighted analyses and bold conclusions we support. To its credit, the report calls upon us to consider the issue of security from a holistic perspective. Security and therefore peace can be guaranteed in a durable way only if we fight together to reduce poverty and to promote development and democracy.

The report, truly a plea for development and peace in Africa, makes a timely contribution to promoting the confidence of the African masses in our Organization. Through the deliberations it prompted in the Security Council, ordinary men and women throughout Africa were able to hear, in the voice of their United Nations, an echo of their own daily reality.

The report of the Secretary-General is, in our opinion, a plea for peace in Africa. This peace can be assured only by the peaceful settlement and prevention of conflicts. We can no longer, we must no longer, prepare for war in order to have peace; rather, we need to support peace in order to prevent war. These two concepts constitute the essence of my statement.

As this century comes to a close, Africa is the arena of many conflicts. Within some States, ethnic and political differences and conflicts of interest — because they have been improperly dealt with or poorly managed — are degenerating into confrontation and civil war. Likewise, neighbouring, brotherly countries are divided or torn apart by border disputes born, in most instances, of lack of respect for the sacrosanct principle of the inviolability of the borders inherited from the colonial era.

As regards the consequences, considerable resources have been mobilized to conduct fratricidal wars while hunger racks populations, and there is a distressing procession of refugees, displaced persons and entire populations that are prey to epidemics, massacres and slaughter.

Africa needs peace. Already facing so many scourges, it cannot continue to enjoy the luxury of useless and expensive wars among its peoples. If it is to have peace, tolerance and respect must once again become African virtues. Law, dialogue, working together and seeking consensus in order to reconcile apparently opposing interests preserve peace better than taking up arms.

Such dialogue must be the rule in relations among African States, all of which, in accordance with the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and that of the United Nations, are committed to resolving their differences by peaceful means, including by having recourse to the International Court of Justice.

Africa expects the international community to support the strengthening of the capacities to intervene and act of the conflict-settlement mechanisms that have been established by the Africans themselves. It also expects the international community to provide constructive, positive support to the democratization process taking place as part of the establishment of States based on the rule of law in order to ensure peace and stability.

Such assistance must be provided impartially, without systematic support for certain political factions. It should help promote and consolidate national concord. In order to maintain peace in Africa we also need to commit ourselves resolutely to conflict prevention. This brings me to the second point of my speech.

According to the Charter, the mission of the United Nations is

> "to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace".

Conflict prevention is thus one of the primary responsibilities of the Organization. And yet we do not always sufficiently stress preventive action. In fact, more of the resources of the Organization are used for purely therapeutic measures such as the deployment of peacekeeping operations — which are often deployed too late.

Therefore, we think it useful to stress some activities that could help prevent conflicts or, at the very least, prevent those conflicts from degenerating into violence or armed struggle. Peacekeeping forces made available to States after or during a conflict, seek to prevent a resumption of violence. Cameroon believes that the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, could decide to systematically deploy forces preventively in situations where there was a clear danger of an armed conflict breaking out at any moment. This would be particularly relevant to border disputes. Given the success of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, it should not remain the lone example of this approach. Likewise, when confronted with these conflict situations the Secretary-General should be encouraged to have greater recourse to the appointment of personal representatives.

In the context of the struggle for peace in Africa, special attention should be paid to the illicit trafficking in small arms and their circulation among civilians. This is a matter of concern to us. Ninety per cent of those wounded or killed by these weapons are civilians — 80 per cent of them women or children. It is therefore urgent to seek a global consensus on the oversight and control of illicit arms transfers. Cameroon welcomes the convening, in the near future we hope, of a United Nations conference to consider all aspects of the illicit arms trade. The Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa would appreciate United Nations assistance so that we could develop effective measures for stemming the flow of small arms in our subregion.

The prevention of conflicts necessarily depends on the development of a culture of peace. We appreciate the aid received from the United Nations, through the Standing Advisory Committee, to support our efforts to consolidate peace and security in the subregion.

We are confident that we can continue to benefit from this assistance and that of friendly countries for the pursuance of our programmes to develop the men and women of our subregion into makers of peace. This is an urgent and importance task. The preamble to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Constitution reminds us that

> "since wars begin in the minds of men, and it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

The effort to prevent conflicts cannot be confined to political causes; it must also deal with economic causes.

As the Security Council, meeting at the level of heads of State or Government on 31 January 1992, acknowledged,

> "The absence of war and military conflicts amongst States does not in itself ensure international peace and security. The non-military sources of instability in the economic...[field] have become threats to peace and security." (*S/23500, presidential statement, eleventh paragraph*)

Poverty is therefore a threat to peace and stability. This is all the more true in Africa, where, because of the crushing debt burden, the constraints of structural adjustment and the dwindling aid received, African States are no longer able to finance adequately the minimum social services that are necessary for the well-being of their peoples.

Hence, how can we prevent conflicts in Africa if we do not attack the economic and social problems that have an impact on peace and security with the same energy as we tackle political problems?

The holistic view of security, which was so eloquently described by the Secretary-General in his report, calls for the Security Council, to which the Charter confers "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security", to use all of the Charter's potential to attack poverty in Africa. Why not use the machinery described in its Article 65, whereby the Economic and Social Council can provide the Security Council with information and assist it if the latter so requests?

What Africa needs to ensure its sustainable development is, in the first place, an equitable solution to the debt burden problem, which is strangling the economies of our countries to the point where financial transfers have become negative for many of them. Here we welcome the announcement by the Secretary-General of the holding this week of a high-level round table on African debt. It also needs a balanced partnership with the industrialized countries that would allow Africa to get the aid and investments it needs. Finally, it needs a review of the working methods and functioning of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank so that these two important instruments will serve Africa and its sustainable development.

That is why Cameroon welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General to target efforts towards resolving the economic problems of Africa in the five following priority areas: increasing and improving official development assistance; converting into grants all remaining official bilateral debt; expanding access to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative; making more flexible the conditions for access to markets for African exports; and finally, increasing investments. If the international community were to keep its promises in these five areas, there would be real progress towards the creation of conditions for sustainable development and durable peace in Africa.

Cameroon made the following point last April in the Security Council: the absence of development may constitute a threat to international prosperity, peace and security. As communications develop, distances between various parts of the planet are getting much smaller.

The twenty-first century cannot tolerate islands of prosperity and opulence in an ocean of suffering and destitution. Africa's economic backwardness, therefore, is still a major challenge to us all; we can and must meet this challenge. Global equilibrium and the very survival of humankind depend on it.

The international community has mobilized in the past to rebuild and develop some parts of the world. Africa expects the international community to assist it in its renaissance at the dawn of the third millennium. When Africa awakes, it will remember.

Mr. Mapuranga (Zimbabwe): My delegation fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Namibia on behalf of the Southern African States, as well as that delivered by the representative of Burkina Faso on behalf of the member States of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). I shall therefore endeavour to refrain from making a contribution repetitive of issues already raised in those two statements.

My delegation is pleased to recall that the Secretary-General's report entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa" was the subject of a formal meeting of the Security Council. We are encouraged to note that the Security Council, for its part, has taken significant steps, such as setting up working groups and adopting important resolutions on the Secretary-General's recommendations.

In this regard, we most heartily welcome this meeting, which has afforded the Assembly the opportunity to focus on aspects of the report which lie within the purview of the General Assembly's authority.

As we explore ways and means of achieving peace, security and stability, we cannot ignore the magnitude of the socio-economic problems confronting the African continent, which are ever so real and lie at the very core of the issue of peace and stability in Africa, the most economically backward region of the world. Very often, there is a tendency to dwell on the symptoms, while avoiding a confrontation with the root causes of instability in Africa.

In his report, the Secretary-General emphasizes that any and all efforts at securing peace have to be combined with steps towards ending Africa's poverty. Specifically, he called for the promotion of investment for economic growth, ensuring adequate levels of international aid, reducing the excruciating debt burden and opening international markets to Africa's products. This is an appeal which has the full support of my delegation, because it addresses some of the root causes of conflict in my continent.

My delegation strongly supports the priorities highlighted by the Secretary-General on 24 September 1998 at the informal meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistant Committee. Those priority needs are to increase the volume and improve the quality of official development assistance; to consider converting all remaining official bilateral debt owed by poor countries into grants; to liberalize access to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative; to ease access conditions for African exports; and to encourage investment in Africa, which has largely been marginalized in the process of globalization. I wish at this point to acknowledge and congratulate those Governments and development partners which have taken the lead in responding to these priority needs by converting bilateral debt owed by the poorest African countries into grants and increasing their development budgets in general.

Most of our countries in Africa have come a long way and made significant and very demanding strides to create an enabling environment for investment and economic growth. I wish to assure the international community that Africa will not be found wanting in this global effort to promote durable peace and sustainable development on the continent. We have long realized that Africa's problems require African leadership to find the solutions, but there is much that countries with greater resources can do in solidarity to make those solutions work.

In this connection, the United Nations should endeavour to extend, in concrete terms, assistance to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. Similarly, it is imperative to support such subregional security arrangements as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which accomplished a splendid mission by restoring a democratically elected Government in Sierra Leone, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, whose member States are currently involved in operations to uphold the authority of the Government in the Kingdom of Lesotho and to defend the Democratic Republic of the Congo from invasion by two of its neighbours.

With regard to the role of the United Nations system, my delegation welcomes the commitment made by the Secretary-General that the Senior Management Group and the important sectors represented by those senior managers should vigorously work on follow-up activities to the report. We are most pleased that the Secretary-General has asked the Deputy Secretary-General to monitor the implementation of those follow-up activities. We also wish to encourage the pace-setting contacts and exchanges between the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity.

I wish to conclude by reiterating the Secretary-General's findings that peace and prosperity must be sought as one, with equal zeal and priority, and that political stability needs to be buttressed by economic development. Let us realize the goal of promoting durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

Mr. Dangue Réwaka (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): It is well known that the Security Council, of which Gabon is currently a member, has held two formal meetings on the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa to consider the recommendations that fall within its purview as the principal organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Following the first of these two meetings, held on 24 April 1998, the Security Council adopted resolution 1170 (1998), whereby it decided, *inter alia*, to establish an ad hoc Working Group mandated

> "to review all recommendations in the report related to the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, and in that context, to prepare a framework for the implementation of recommendations, as appropriate, and to submit specific proposals for concrete action for consideration by the Council by September 1998". (*Security Council resolution 1170 (1998), para. 4*)

That Working Group, chaired by Gabon, has brought its thinking process to bear on the topics of coordination between the Organization and African regional and subregional organizations in the areas of prevention and peacekeeping; the building of African capacity in peacekeeping; illicit flows of small arms; strengthening arms embargoes; security and neutrality in refugee camps; and the Security Council's ability to monitor the activities it has authorized. It was in this context of broader activity that the Security Council, at its meeting of 24 September 1998, began to take specific measures to follow-up the Secretary-General's recommendations. As Gabon clearly expressed its views on these matters during the Council meetings devoted to the report, I am sure I may today focus solely on the problems involved in promoting durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

Among the aspects underlined by the Secretary-General in his report, I would particularly stress that the basic principles of democracy must be respected in Africa because, in our opinion, the continent's development demands that all actors of civil society be taken into account. Thus it is vital that the people themselves take charge of their development. In order to do this, they must ensure that their rights are recognized and that democratic rules are observed in the conduct of their country's social, economic and political affairs.

As far as my country is concerned, the head of the Gabonese delegation has already at this fifty-third session eloquently reported on the work we have done and are continuing to do in all those areas.

With respect to sustainable development, we concur with the Secretary-General about the need for economic growth to be accompanied by progress on the social and human levels. High priority must therefore be given to the development of social services in order to meet basic needs and support human capital, particularly in the key areas of education, health and vulnerable groups.

Plainly, if this target is to be met, there must be investment in infrastructures, as well as economic and political reforms in order to create an environment favourable to the emergence of a productive private sector and an efficient public sector. Recent studies by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on direct foreign investment around the world prove that Africa is a profitable region for investors. But we must note that for some years development assistance has steadily declined, with attendant adverse effects on the economies of many African countries.

International assistance therefore needs to be restructured, and the developed countries should be urged to direct that assistance towards the sectors deemed worthy of priority by the African countries and to increase it substantially in order to offset the shortage of direct foreign investment and of national resources. Likewise, donor countries should fulfil the commitments they have freely made and strive to bring their aid and assistance programmes into line with the recipient countries' plans.

It cannot be overemphasized that an increase in financial resources for Africa's development necessarily involves a lasting solution to the painful problem of African debt. Certainly, relief has been agreed to by many donor countries, but increased efforts need to be made.

In this respect, while hailing the initiative of the Bretton Woods institutions in favour of the most indebted and poorest countries, it is regrettable that the number of beneficiary countries of that initiative is still restricted because of the slow pace of the debt-relief process and the conditionalities imposed. Accordingly, I support the Secretary-General's idea that concerted political action at the highest level is required in order to find a satisfactory resolution of the problem of African debt.

Has not the time come to apply the twofold proposal of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which advocates forgiveness of all the debt of the poorest African countries and reconsideration of the situation of so-called upper tier, middle-income countries within a reasonably short period of time and in the context of comprehensive reform of their respective economies?

Those are some factors which combine to exacerbate tension and conflict in our continent.

Concerted action by Member States of the United Nations, the United Nations system as a whole and the international financial institutions, together with other organizations, would help to give a comprehensive, satisfactory response to the multisectoral recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

In conclusion, we believe that our efforts would be fruitless if at the end of this exercise the General Assembly failed to adopt, for example, a plan of action and follow-up mechanism which would facilitate and secure implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations.

Mr. Benítez-Sáenz (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The question before us is one of the priorities of Uruguay's foreign policy: the situation in Africa, the maintenance of lasting peace as a top priority for sustainable development and full enjoyment of the inherent freedoms and rights of the individual, with the full exercise of democratic government. Without peace there cannot be full respect for human rights. Without peace it is not possible to secure sustainable development. Without peace it is not possible to have the full exercise of a democratic system of government in which the three branches of the State — the executive, legislative and judicial — enjoy their rights on an equal footing and independent of one another.

I can be very brief, because we fully agree with all of the excellent report presented by the Secretary-General in document A/52/871 of 13 April 1998. We are glad that the report, originally requested by the Security Council, has also been submitted by the Secretary-General to the Assembly because this contributes not only to recognition of the legitimate powers of this sovereign organ of the Organization, but also to highlighting them.

Because of its own history, nature and particular characteristics, Uruguay regards its presence in Africa as a matter of fraternal equality, with all the solidarity that such feelings involve. Uruguay's sole interest is in cooperation with the fraternal continent in order to secure the stability necessary for its development and well-being. We are convinced that the development and well-being of Africa mean the development and well-being of Latin America and the Caribbean, and that they will contribute to the development and well-being of the rest of the world.

To that end, Uruguay has deployed its personnel in a number of peacekeeping operations. It has contributed in this way in Mozambique, Liberia and Rwanda, and its personnel are still being deployed in Angola and Western Sahara.

These operations have meant the loss of Uruguayan lives; our nation's citizens have shed their blood on African soil. Though this has meant inconsolable grief for our families, it has also certainly, contributed to exalting the honour of our people, civilian or military, as they contribute alongside the fraternal peoples of Africa to the objective of peacekeeping.

But this is not all that binds us to the African continent. Just a few months ago, at a high-level meeting, we were considering the importance of ensuring equal access for all developing countries to international markets. On that same occasion, my delegation stated that securing competitiveness and a more active involvement in international markets is today a prerequisite for growth.

We need only glance at the African continent and at Latin America and the Caribbean to understand how important agriculture is in those countries for achieving sustained economic development. For this reason, Uruguay once again reaffirms that we must work in concert within the framework of the competent

multilateral institutions in order to significantly reduce agricultural tariffs, which now rise as high as 600 per cent.

We must join forces to end export subsidies on agricultural products from developed countries, which work to the detriment of those of us who wish to achieve greater economic growth, well-being, food security and sustainable development. We feel able to compete in a free and well-balanced world market, but we will never be able to compete with the treasuries of the industrialized countries.

Five days ago, in this very Assembly, we commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among developing Countries. We are convinced that this instrument of international cooperation remains an essential tool for our countries in today's world. In this context, Uruguay, together with a number of South American and African countries, has set up the Afro-Latin American Institute, whose purpose is to promote political bonds between these two subregions in order, in the future, to have closer relations and share mutual experiences in areas such as trade, education, health and agriculture.

It should also be noted that Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil, together with the African countries that have coastlines on the South Atlantic, make up the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic. This represents one more area of political and economic cooperation, as well as a guarantee of peace in the region.

For all these reasons, in conclusion, we feel bound to underscore our full concurrence with the Secretary-General regarding the need to conduct preventive diplomacy in a better, more precise and more global fashion, having particularly in mind post-conflict activities that will permit the construction and consolidation of lasting and durable peace in Africa.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): There was wisdom in bringing to the attention of the General Assembly the question of the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We share the position that, while the matter should continue to enjoy high priority on the agenda of the Security Council, consideration by the General Assembly is required.

Africa is a huge and rich continent. As the report of the Secretary-General correctly indicates, the sources of conflict in Africa are a reflection of the continent's diversity and complexity. Yet it is easy to perceive the elements that have preconditioned these conflicts. Some are, of course, internal in nature; others are legacies of the past, when kingdoms, States and communities were arbitrarily divided by the colonial masters; and still others are consequences of economic want, with the control of precious natural resources or competition for scarce land and water resources igniting border problems.

As noted in the same report, more that 30 wars have been fought in Africa since 1970, the majority of them intra-State in origin.

It may be worth noting that the promised benefits of the process of globalization appear to be elusive for many countries in Africa. At the same time, other African countries have in fact been adversely affected by the negative forces of globalization through depressed prices in export commodities following the financial turmoil that began in East Asia. Invariably, this has accentuated the inherent conditions inhibiting sustainable development in many African countries.

We must all realize that the continuing conflicts in Africa pose a major challenge to all our efforts to ensure global peace, security and prosperity. All efforts vis-à-vis other flash points in the world are incomplete and inconclusive unless the conflicts in Africa are seriously addressed. The international community and the African countries themselves must be able to find ways and means to quickly end the civil strife that is occurring in some parts of the continent, prevent more conflicts and provide a durable foundation for peace, security and development.

We believe that peacemaking efforts need to be well coordinated and well prepared. In this regard, we fully agree with the Secretary-General's statement that

> "Where a peace process is needed, it is the role of the United Nations, with OAU, to help create one." (*A/52/871, para. 18*)

Certainly, the role of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and other regional bodies in Africa such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the resolution of the conflicts in Africa and its development and prosperity cannot be overemphasized.

My delegation is pleased that the Security Council has taken up the recommendations in the report of the

Secretary-General and that appropriate follow-up actions are being pursued. In this regard, we encourage the Working Group established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1170 (1998) to carry out its important task in the most expeditious manner.

We also believe that efforts aimed at preventing armed conflicts should continue to be directed towards those parts of Africa where the potential for conflict remains high. In this regard, it becomes crucial that the international community accord the fullest support to Security Council resolutions 1196 (1998) and 1197 (1998), aimed at strengthening both the effectiveness of arms embargoes on conflict areas and the peacekeeping capacity of the African countries themselves.

Stopping the proliferation of arms will also have a greater chance of success if accompanied by an initiative engaging the countries concerned in a process of confidence-building and thus giving them a common aspiration for security and development. We therefore support any initiative that the United Nations can implement in this regard. The United Nations should be able to evolve a strategy that brings into focus all interrelated elements, encouraging concerned African countries to put at centre stage the commonality of their interests for a stable and prosperous Africa.

The usual tools of peacemaking must be brought to bear. This may involve the deployment of peacemaking resources as essential ingredients of the strategy. It may refer to diplomatic efforts and the traditional approaches of negotiation, mediation, good offices, fact-finding missions and judicial resolution.

But one important component must be the protection of civilians in situations of conflict. We endorse the proposal in the Secretary-General's report on zones of peace for children, join the call for stopping the use of children as combatants and reiterate our appeal to all parties in conflicts to respect existing universal humanitarian principles.

Apart from the security issue, the required action must also address humanitarian needs and assistance for the recovery and reconstruction of affected African countries. Providing assistance to the victims of conflict is a moral imperative and must be pursued as a complement to action directed at the resolution of the conflict itself. It is not a substitute for political action aimed at conflict resolution. It is a necessary provision, as a step towards full recovery, rehabilitation and development. It is therefore critical that humanitarian assistance be properly coordinated with the affected countries themselves.

Another critical component of the strategy is the strengthening of the economic foundations for sustainable development of the African countries. Many of them continue to rely substantially on official development assistance for development financing. It is important that there should be no disruption or reduction in the provision of such sources of finance. We note the comment in paragraph 90 of the same report of the Secretary-General that

> "Dramatic cuts in assistance to Africa have been registered in recent years. This trend has hurt rather than helped Africa's efforts to implement the difficult economic and political reforms which are now under way across the continent."

On a related issue, the United Nations system should be able to sustain a level of development cooperation that is adequately funded and supported by the donor community. We need to reinvigorate all the initiatives that favour the countries in Africa, such as United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

The international community must also find a solution to Africa's unsustainable external debt burden. In paragraph 95 of his report, the Secretary-General notes that

> "Significant movement on lifting Africa's crippling debt burden will require concerted political action at the highest levels."

My delegation fully endorses the call of the Secretary-General for definitive action by the international community on the question of Africa's external debt.

My delegation also joins the call for special efforts that must be extended by the developed countries to ensure access for competitive African goods and commodities. We agree with the proposal that the question of eliminating trade barriers to African products should be high on the agenda of the major industrialized countries and that in this regard an appropriate common policy should be adopted either bilaterally between the concerned African countries and the developed countries or within the World Trade Organization.

I wish to conclude by expressing the hope that the statements we have all made before this Assembly may be translated into specific contributions to resolve the perennial conflict in the African continent and bring about peace, security and prosperity in that region.

Let me also reaffirm the full support of the Philippines for the Secretary-General's call for concrete action to create a new momentum for peace and development in Africa.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): The General Assembly's consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Africa gives us a further opportunity to consider the important questions raised in the report. It also allows us to reflect more profoundly on ways and means of helping Africa meet the challenges that it is facing. The widening of the debate on this question in the General Assembly will facilitate an understanding of the problems of the continent and, we hope, will further sensitize the international community to the need to work for the development of our countries.

The inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly also reinforces the action of the Security Council, which last April showed great interest in the maintenance of peace in Africa and in contributing to the development and growth of the continent.

Our meeting today will also contribute to a better understanding of this huge and multifaceted continent. It will help balance the view that some have of Africa by recalling that that ancient continent in which young States are developing is also a land of hope and of the future that aspires to contribute to global civilization and to make its mark on the coming century. The security problems that affect certain regions of Africa continue, of course, to be a source of concern. The consequences of these problems are often tragic and create intolerable situations whose first victims are civilians. The cost and the damage caused by these scourges consume enormous amounts of human and financial resources that could be used for the development of the continent.

Even if fratricidal wars are reaching alarming proportions in some regions, we should not forget that political stability, which is linked to the breakdown of the social fabric, especially along ethnic lines, is not a problem peculiar to Africa.

My country believes that the United Nations has a fundamental role to play in finding solutions to intra-State conflicts. This means that all the structures and institutions of the United Nations should coordinate their activities effectively and should be in a position to respond appropriately to the needs that arise.

We applaud the efforts of the Secretary-General in that respect. It goes without saying that the contribution of Member States is vital to ensure that this work is successful. However, cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity is crucial in this area. Experience has shown that the establishment of structures for conflict prevention, management and resolution by that pan-African organization requires major resources, given the activities that must be carried out. In this connection, the delegation of Tunisia welcomes the measures recently recommended by the Security Council. We believe that prevention should be at the centre of efforts to preserve peace and security in Africa.

With regard to peacekeeping, we believe that the modalities for cooperation advocated by the Security Council to strengthen the capacity of Africa in that respect deserve to be developed in practice. The idea of a partnership between troop-contributing countries and those that can provide equipment is a useful way to increase the participation of African States in peacekeeping operations. It is important to stress here the vital role of the United Nations in launching these operations and defining their mandate, as well as in financing them, in keeping with the primary responsibility of the Security Council in this area.

The various initiatives to strengthen the peacekeeping capacity of Africa should therefore be viewed positively. We should like to stress that the continuation and development of these initiatives require us to take account of the parameters established by the African States as well as the objectives outlined by the OAU.

My country's delegation also believes the effort for conflict prevention should not be confined to security matters but must also encompass socio-economic issues. Tensions and crises often lead to the outbreak of conflicts that originate in the persistence of poverty, marginalization and deteriorating living conditions.

Quite clearly, without development we can hardly hope to reduce conflicts whose origin often lies in poverty, marginalization and discrimination. Economic growth alone certainly cannot guarantee stability or social

peace, but without it there can be no lasting improvement in the economic and social situation in our countries.

In order to achieve this, and despite the difficult international environment, African countries have adopted strong economic measures through stabilization programmes and structural adjustment programmes. These programmes have all had a multidimensional aspect encompassing, *inter alia*, economic and commercial liberalization measures, improving financial management and modernizing taxation systems.

Nevertheless, we would stress that many African countries that have established Draconian structural adjustment programmes have often had to slash their social expenditures and therefore reduce basic social services. The necessary economic restructuring has led to the recovery that we are now seeing in Africa after 20 or so years of recession. However, this improvement will remain fragile unless backed up by the international community through sufficient infusions of secure resources and a favourable external context.

Accordingly, the countries of the South can give considerable assistance to Africa through technology transfers, training, joint ventures and investment. The solidarity of the countries of the South was made clear at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development and the Asia-Africa Forum on experience sharing.

Work done now by the industrialized countries and the United Nations system should, we think, be much more vigorous in terms of official development assistance, investment, access to markets and dealing with the problem of indebtedness.

Turning specifically to the problem of indebtedness, it is widely acknowledged that it has serious consequences for investment and new growth. Not only does it make it impossible for public investment in physical infrastructure and human resources, but it discourages private investment, including foreign investment. Need I recall here that the external debt of African countries, expressed as a percentage of exports and gross domestic product, is the highest of all developing regions?

In this context, Tunisia appreciates the initiatives taken by some countries to cancel the debts of African countries. Because of the complex situation existing in our continent, we believe that urgent measures for Africa should be taken to alleviate the external debt, as well as to promote economic diversification and to mobilize additional financial resources both by means of official development assistance and by encouraging the private sector to invest in Africa.

My delegation welcomes this debate on the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Africa. The high level of the discussion is a good sign that our work will conclude positively.

Mr. Menkerios (Eritrea): In speaking on this agenda item, it is quite fitting to start by commending the Secretary-General for his insightful report on the root causes of conflict and the measures necessary to ensure durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. Although the causes and remedies of Africa's political and economic problems are well presented in the report, it is important to highlight and expound upon some of the key elements of these problems and solutions.

The causes of Africa's problems, both political and economic, have external and internal roots, and a proper understanding of these is necessary when looking for solutions. The colonial experience left a legacy of ills for the continent. The depletion and decimation of material and human resources undermined, if not destroyed, social institutions; not so well-fitted — indeed, implanted — politico-economic systems; and a host of other injustices contributed to a handicapped start for African countries at the time of independence. Overcoming this legacy has proved very difficult for African peoples and Governments, especially when the attempt was complicated by the unequal relationship which, of necessity, ensued with the economically developed countries, leading to Africa's marginalization in all spheres of international development. This, I believe, needs to be well understood and accepted, and conscious efforts made, both internally and externally, to compensate for or correct it through time.

We would, however, be looking for excuses for our failures — incorrect and irresponsible — if we Africans were to believe and say that all our problems were caused by factors beyond our doing and control, and if we expected their solutions to come from outside as well. It has been more than 30 years since decolonization in most of Africa, and corrupt, dictatorial and inept regimes in many African countries are responsible for preventing African peoples from making any headway in any aspect of society during this period. This has also affected the international attitude and response to Africa. Any change in the hitherto existing international attitude and response

of neglect to Africa can come only as a result of positive changes inside Africa itself.

Such positive changes have of course begun to arrive in many parts of Africa, especially during the last decade. Responsible regimes have appeared, committed to building democratic institutions, adopting development strategies based on their peoples' needs and their human and material resource capability, enhancing especially their human resource capacity and, most importantly, working for regional cooperation and integration. This process of change, I believe, is well set. Despite the enormous problems that are being encountered along the way, it can and will only continue forward for it represents the positive aspirations of a growing number of Africa's peoples that are no longer prepared to accept being excluded from the determination of their own destiny.

Parallel with the eruption of conflicts — mostly with root causes associated with past ills and economic deprivation — and the appearance of famines and other human disasters in many areas, Africa's continental and regional capacity to work in a concerted manner for peace, stability and economic development has increased. The sustained higher rate of economic development achieved in many countries, which can be taken as the best indicator of improvement in all the other aspects of social life, also attests to the continuity of the process of positive change in Africa.

But although this process may be expected to continue, the speed with which it can continue depends on many crucial factors. It all starts with changes made within each country in the direction of establishing and strengthening democratic institutions, adopting and implementing appropriate, self-reliant development strategies, eliminating corruption, ensuring the democratic participation of the population in all aspects of their nation's life, *et cetera*. Fostering regional cooperation both in establishing peace and stability and in working for economic development is of great importance. Partnership from the international community in these endeavours — support to enhance capacity, increased investment, the opening up of international markets for mutual benefit, and opening up other doors for Africa's integration into the world economy — is also essential.

Much more could be said on these points, but I believe this has been adequately done in the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General. What remains to be achieved is a genuine and concerted effort to implement the recommendations that have been made. Eritrea fully endorses the basic recommendations made in the report of the Secretary-General, and pledges to do its part to ensure that Africa's regeneration becomes a reality.

Conflicts exist today in several parts of Africa, and much has been said about these conflict and their resolution during the general debate at the present session, as well as in other forums. One of these conflicts is the border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, which remains unresolved because of the refusal of the Ethiopian Government to talk about a peaceful solution unless and until Eritrea unilaterally and unconditionally withdraws from territories that Ethiopia claims but that are within Eritrea's established borders.

One does not erase the fact that one is an aggressor by simply accusing the victim of being the aggressor. That, unfortunately, is what Ethiopian representatives here have tried to do during this entire session. Eritrea has made it abundantly clear that the sad and unnecessary conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia started as a result of Ethiopia's violation of Eritrean sovereignty and Ethiopia's occupation of Eritrean territories that are clearly within Eritrea's borders as established during the colonial period. Eritrea has not only invited independent verification of this fact from the outset, but has also presented concrete proposals for the peaceful and legal solution of the issue. Eritrea remains ready for dialogue with the Ethiopian Government on an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, demilitarization of all disputed areas throughout the area of the border between the two countries, and the demarcation of the common border on the basis of recognition of the inviolability of boundaries established during the colonial period.

It is disappointing that the Ethiopian Government rejects any proposal for a peaceful solution short of Eritrea's unconditional acceptance of its ultimatum on unilateral withdrawal from disputed territories. It threatens to use force unless its ultimatum is bowed to.

I would like to pledge the continuing firm commitment of the State of Eritrea to seeking a peaceful and legal solution and to condemning the use of force. I would like to invite the representative of Ethiopia to make a similar commitment before the General Assembly. Clearly, it is the rejection of these principles and adherence to the threat or use of force that constitutes aggression. Clearly too, succumbing to this threat or use of force would constitute appeasement.

There has been adequate independent testimony to Ethiopia's violation of the human rights of Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin, and of the humane treatment of Ethiopians in Eritrea. Throwing the mud that you find on your own face, which is what we have heard the Ethiopian representative doing here, cannot reverse the facts.

I would like to reiterate that Eritrea is prepared to do its share to ensure peace and stability with its neighbour, Ethiopia, with the rest of the Horn of Africa region, and with all of Africa, and to work for the implementation of the essential proposals made in the report of the Secretary-General.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/6 of 16 October 1990, I now call on the observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Ms. Junod (International Committee of the Red Cross) (*interpretation from French*): As members know, the mission of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is to prevent and relieve the suffering caused by war. Sadly, Africa is the main arena for its activities today. The ICRC has 19 operational and regional delegations and some 3,000 staff on that continent, and its work in Africa accounts for almost half of its operational budget. We therefore feel closely involved with the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, which reflects a number of our own concerns. We had the privilege of taking the floor before the Security Council during the open debate that took place last spring, and now we think it important to make a brief contribution in this plenary meeting of the General Assembly, which represents the entire community of States.

We must deplore the human suffering caused by the eruption of new conflicts since the publication of the report — in Guinea-Bissau, between Ethiopia and Eritrea, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, most recently, in Lesotho — adding to the already heavy toll.

Working for conflict victims is the *raison d'être* of the ICRC. Today more than ever, this work would be inconceivable without the ongoing dialogue the ICRC maintains not only with the United Nations but also with the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which has also granted it observer status. This close cooperation, especially in the framework of the OAU Commission of Twenty on Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Africa, is indispensable for gaining a better understanding of the contexts in which we have to operate. That understanding is further enhanced by a valuable network of contacts, which are required to increase our effectiveness.

We shall confine our remarks today to two main areas: reaffirmation of the relevance of international humanitarian law, and the need for genuinely humanitarian action to assist victims of conflict, action that prepares the ground for reconstruction and creates the conditions necessary for sustainable development.

Like the Secretary-General, we have noted the sharp decline in the level of adherence to humanitarian norms in crisis situations. In view of the abuses and atrocities committed against civilian victims of conflict, particularly women and children, and against refugees, displaced persons, detainees and prisoners, it is absolutely essential to restore respect for universal humanitarian principles by all those who bear weapons. Furthermore, it should be remembered that the non-governmental actors appearing on the scene in increasing numbers are also duty-bound to observe minimum humanitarian standards.

The ICRC can therefore only endorse such a clear diagnosis and such a pressing appeal in these times marked by the proliferation of conflicts in countries where State structures have collapsed and by the emergence of struggles aimed at asserting identity of one kind or another in which the annihilation of a group of people regarded as rivals is the principal objective. A new difficulty has been added to this, one associated with what we refer to as the privatization of war and the emergence of forces which depend on private groups or individuals over whom State authorities have little or no influence.

Africa is rich in traditions imbued with profound human values which it shares with humanitarian law and which can be found in the codes that have traditionally governed the conduct of hostilities. The challenge before us all is therefore to revive those values, especially among the young — the vital force which makes up three quarters of the continent's population. This mobilization is a long-term preventive effort to make everyone aware of the fact that, whatever the situation, there are limits to violence and that neither those who order acts of violence, nor those who carry them out, nor those who tolerate them can say "I did not know". All the Member States of the United Nations have undertaken not only to respect, but also to ensure respect for, the humanitarian

law treaties. This is therefore a universal collective obligation with regard to all conflict victims. It is everyone's business.

In this regard, the African countries have embarked on a process of legislative reform with the technical assistance of the ICRC's Advisory Service in order to incorporate into their national legislation the measures necessary to implement humanitarian law, and in particular to prosecute the perpetrators of violations.

It is unfortunately a well-known fact that war criminals usually manage to avoid being brought to justice. The creation by the Security Council of the ad hoc Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda was a first step in criminal prosecutions. The adoption in Rome of the Statute of the International Criminal Court is now another reason to hope, especially because it covers violations committed during internal armed conflicts and includes war crimes such as the recruitment of children under the age of 15 into armed conflicts, rape and sexual slavery.

There are other factors that give us every reason to expect that the number of victims will decline in the future. Of the 47 parties to the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel mines, 13 are African States. In fact, we learned this morning that a new State, Guinea, has been added to that list. We have no doubt that many others will follow their lead in the near future. Subsequently, all will have to join forces to take practical measures to eliminate landmines.

In his report, the Secretary-General raises the issue of the proliferation of light weapons, which without a doubt account for innumerable violations of humanitarian law. The proposal put forward by Mali for a moratorium on the manufacture, export and import of light weapons in West Africa is a pioneering initiative in this respect.

The Secretary-General has stressed the need for the international community to use all the mechanisms at its disposal in a consistent and coordinated manner to find comprehensive solutions to conflicts. Such solutions must take into account political, social and economic factors without which lasting results cannot be achieved. Indeed, the ICRC notes with increasing concern the tendency shown by certain States in recent years to resort to humanitarian action instead of taking political or even military action when it is appropriate within the framework of relevant international instruments. Central Africa is a good example of this.

However, nothing can replace the political will to resolve the underlying causes of conflict and the tragedies they cause by using the whole range of legitimate means available, including restoring law and order. Humanitarian assistance cannot be a substitute. Supplying aid to the victims of conflict is the business of organizations whose aims and working methods are genuinely humanitarian. The issue of the safety of the resident, refugee and displaced populations of the Great Lakes region provides us with a prime illustration of this and we are seeing the tragic consequences today.

Acknowledging the need for a strategic approach, political, military and humanitarian players therefore have to harmonize their activities. They must seek synergies between their activities with due regard for their interdependence, but also for their respective mandates and specific roles. However, this approach must not subject all humanitarian action to political objectives at the expense of the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

The best interests of victims remain at the core of the concerns and operations of the ICRC. For example, as the Secretary-General points out, the imposition of sanctions by the international community can affect unforeseen victims. Furthermore, we have always spoken in favour of exemptions on humanitarian grounds. We are pleased to note in this connection that more sensitive indicators for assessing and even anticipating the impact of sanctions on the population are being developed.

All of this is not to say that humanitarian action has no political dimension or that it never has any impact on the course of a conflict. It is true that the presence of humanitarian organizations has sometimes had adverse effects by unintentionally serving the purposes of war. In this regard the ICRC shares the Secretary-General's concern about emergency situations which attract a multitude of aid agencies with divergent objectives and working methods. In such circumstances it is essential that these agencies harmonize their action and avoid duplication of efforts. Moreover, this is vital for the safety of all concerned.

The report highlights the need to integrate and establish links between the concepts and the actions involved in assistance, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. The ICRC fully endorses this opinion. In its aid operations it has opted where possible for an approach whose ultimate purpose is to help the individuals and communities concerned to regain their

autonomy and to free themselves of dependence on outside assistance by involving them as closely as possible in the planning and implementation of programmes.

Numerous efforts are being undertaken in this regard in various parts of Africa to restore the means of production to population groups which have suffered the effects of war in such areas as agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries and handicrafts. Similarly, the ICRC is running programmes to restore basic health services, to fit those disabled by war with prosthetic devices and to repair water-supply networks and sewage and waste disposal systems.

In conducting its operations the ICRC mobilizes all available local partners. For both the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the network of African national organizations provides invaluable support. Their volunteers often work in extremely difficult conditions. Many have lost their lives in the course of their duties on the African continent.

Providing aid without taking steps to provide protection would be absurd and could even be counter-productive. Any operation carried out on behalf of victims of conflicts must not only bring them the material assistance they need but also protect them from the dangers that prolong and exacerbate their suffering, while at the same time preserving their human dignity.

The aim of the ICRC's protection activities is essentially to ensure respect for the lives and physical integrity of individuals. This endeavour is inseparable from the work of defending human rights, whose ultimate purpose is the smooth functioning of civil society and the exercise of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this agenda item.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Yimer (Ethiopia): Since last Friday the Assembly has been discussing the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

This is a very important topic, and the reason for the inscription of this item on the agenda is that there are conflicts in Africa. That is the reality. We are not discussing this issue in the abstract, because there are concrete conflict situations in Africa, and we cannot gloss over them in discussing this agenda item.

One of the conflict situations in Africa today is the one between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The report of the Secretary-General was issued on 13 April 1998; almost exactly a month later, Ethiopia was subjected to an unprovoked act of aggression by Eritrea. That is the reality.

This afternoon the representative of Eritrea presented the usual rehash of the Eritrean attempts to hoodwink international opinion on the character of the conflict. This does not come as a surprise to us. Towards the end of his statement he said that there was a border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. But the reason for the conflict today between Ethiopia and Eritrea is not the border dispute. It is aggression committed by a State Member of the United Nations against another to solve a border dispute — the use of force to resolve a border dispute, in violation of Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations. So Ethiopia is the victim of aggression.

The aggressor historically presents itself as the victim; this is a familiar ploy, which we have heard again this afternoon. Again, that does not come as a surprise to us. We are not alone in saying that force was used to settle a border dispute. Since 12 May 1998, a day that will live in infamy, as we said earlier, there have been attempts to resolve this problem, although Ethiopia has never responded in kind.

There have been attempts by third parties, beginning with the United States and Rwanda and up to the Committee of Ambassadors of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), who submitted their report recently on the conflict. None of these third parties has ever indicated that Ethiopia had committed an act of aggression against Eritrea. On the contrary, they have said in clear terms who was where before 12 May 1998. This is clear to everyone, including the Eritrean aggressor.

Now if in addressing this body today we are saying something we have said before and which is familiar, it is because Eritrea has used this ploy — saying that there is a border conflict — repeatedly. We have always said that the border conflict can be resolved only by peaceful means, not by the use of force. If someone uses force to resolve a border dispute, then the victim has every right, under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and in exercise of the right of self-defence, to reverse the aggression. I must put that in terms that are as clear as possible, and not for the first time. We are not addressing this to Eritrea, because there is no point. We are addressing this to the international community.

The other familiar ploy is that Eritrea has submitted concrete proposals. But those concrete proposals happen to be at variance with the proposals submitted by third parties in the past. The familiar proposals are cessation of hostilities, a ceasefire, demilitarization and a plethora of other proposals to appear peace-loving.

We are not going to reward this aggression. We are not going to appease the aggressor. We have never done that at any point in our history. We are not going to follow this path, because it is not a path to peace; it is a path to appeasement. Ethiopia has never refused dialogue with Eritrea. We have said that we will engage in dialogue only when the aggression is reversed; then we will resolve it peacefully, by any means, in any forum. There is no shortage of forums to settle border disputes, because border disputes are numerous throughout the world.

There is no point in rehashing the same stories to appear peace-loving, as I said earlier. The best thing to do would be to accept what the third parties politely said: that there should be a return to the status quo ante of 12 May 1998, and at that point there is a procedure proposed by those third parties to be set in motion once the status quo ante has been restored.

Those proposals were supported by the Organization of African Unity. They were supported strongly by the Security Council. Then the OAU, within the framework of these proposals, started its own process. And the last proposal in the most recent report of the OAU Committee of Ambassadors was — we have it here in black and white; we have the document for everyone to see — that before 12 May 1998 Eritrean troops were within Eritrea, and after 12 May 1988 they were within Ethiopian territory, because those territories were administered by Ethiopia before that day. And what happened between 6 and 12 May constitutes "the fundamental element of the crisis". That is what they said.

Does that indicate that Ethiopia was the aggressor? On the contrary. Maybe they never used the word "aggressor", because in the international community we do not call a spade a spade. But we will call a spade a spade, here and everywhere, however much the Eritrean regime tries to present itself as a victim, because all aggressors throughout history have presented themselves as victims. We propose, therefore, that the aggression should be reversed, and then we will sit down and negotiate a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

That is the bottom line. It is futile to try to hoodwink others or to engage in duplicity to change the reality that the Eritrean aggression continues. It continues even as I speak. But we have been bending over backwards for the last several months, and we will continue to do so with a view to a peaceful resolution. But we will never succumb to aggression.

Mr. Menkerios (Eritrea): I would hate to turn this Assembly, which is discussing the question of conflict and economic problems in Africa and how to resolve them, into a forum more like a court, where declarations are made to an audience that does not have direct access to the truth.

I would like to take the Ethiopian representative at his word. I agree with him that, actually, it is normal for the aggressor to appear as a victim.

Instead of repeating these statements here to each other and to this Assembly, we challenge the Ethiopian Government and the Ethiopian representative to make it explicit here that we should have an independent investigation of who is actually the aggressor and who is not — who is in whose land and who is not. We still stand by that invitation.

Regarding the question of a peaceful solution, here again we have heard the Ethiopian representative continue to misrepresent the fact that there have been attempts in the past at facilitation in which political recommendations were made — not recommendations based on the investigation of facts. It is true that we demanded an investigation of the facts on the ground, and then that there be concrete proposals. And this is exactly what the Organization of African Unity (OAU) heads of State are doing right now.

If there were a finalized recommendation that the OAU had accepted and did not see any reason to pursue, then there would have been no reason for the team of esteemed heads of State in Africa to send ambassadors to investigate the facts on the ground and then to examine these facts and come up with proposals for a solution. These heads of State have just invited both leaders — the leaders of the two countries — to come to Ouagadougou within the next few days, or perhaps a week or two, to a meeting to listen, to present their findings, to present their proposals. We have accepted and cooperated with this process.

It is unreasonable, irrational even, to continue to insist that there have been recommendations that everybody has accepted and everybody has finalized, and that it is only Eritrea that has not complied with them. This has been repeated many, many times.

Eritrea again reiterates that it is ready to cooperate with the peace efforts of Africa, of the OAU — peace efforts in support of this attempt, this effort by Africa. And this process is continuing. We hope that the Ethiopian Government will do the same as well.

Mr. Yimer (Ethiopia): There is a saying, "Something is better than nothing". In the statement in exercise of right of reply by the representative of Eritrea, at least we have heard something. He referred to facilitation. He referred to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) process. He referred to the eminent heads of State of the OAU. He referred to the committee of ambassadors who, as I have said, have presented proposals. All this was glossed over when they were mentioned in his main statement. That is why I said this is an improvement in Eritrea's behaviour, at least as far as we know it up to today.

The representative of Eritrea said that this body does not have access to the truth. The truth is contained in documents. The documents are available. We can make them available to everybody so that they can make their own judgments. It is not abstract. It is not difficult to find. So it is an utter distortion to say that this body has no access to the truth. The international community can have access to the truth. It has access to the truth.

He also talked about an independent investigation. The independent investigation has been done by the committee of ambassadors, which has submitted a report. Those ambassadors have submitted a report to their Foreign Ministers; their Foreign Ministers have presented it to the two Governments; and of course the heads of State are preparing to present their recommendations. So I hope we are not talking about the independent investigation that the Eritrean Government is trying to establish, because they have been laying down conditions. One condition — they have said, "We have concrete proposals of our own", to go along with all this cessation of hostilities, ceasefire, demilitarization. Then we have this proposal, this idea now that there should be an independent investigation. At the same time, and in the same breath, they are saying and we are hearing — at least, as I said, it is something — that there is a process going on, but it is not yet consummated. That is a fact. It is not yet consummated. But every step of the way there have been conclusions. There have been conclusions, and that is a reality. Whether Eritrea likes it or not, these conclusions are stated in black and white, and they have rejected them. We have accepted them. So the improvement is there now, but the situation will not change, because when it comes to taking concrete actions we don't see anything coming from the Eritrean Government.

I am going to repeat myself this afternoon. We are saying we are prepared to go all the way to solve this problem peacefully. But solving this problem peacefully does not mean accepting aggression, allowing the aggressor to enjoy the fruits of aggression. That is what I want to stress again and again. Nobody should be under any illusion here. And the Eritrean Government is not under any illusion that we are going to accept the consequences of the 12 May 1998 aggression. The process is there. That process will have to result in the reversal of the aggression. Then we will sit down and negotiate however long it might take to settle the border dispute, the existence of which we have never denied.

Mr. Menkerios (Eritrea): I simply want to remind this Assembly that I have just heard the threat of the use of force. This threat has continually been made by the leaders of Ethiopia: that Eritrea must unilaterally withdraw from lands that are in dispute, lands that are quite clearly within Eritrean boundaries but the Ethiopian Government claims them as theirs; and unless we do so unconditionally, unilaterally, they will use force to make us do so. That is exactly what we heard from the Ethiopian representative right now.

That is the crux of the matter from the beginning, from the outset — that you use force, and then the other side defends itself, and simply because you cry out "aggression", you expect everybody to accept that as aggression. It is the use of force and the threat of the use

of force that we have just heard again that has become the crux of the problem. Eritrea has rejected the use of force, reiterates again that it rejects the use of force, is prepared for a peaceful and legal solution to this problem and is cooperating with the attempts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to come up with a report.

I again challenge the representative of Ethiopia, who said that there are reports, and that these reports are available to this body, that finalized reports have come from the OAU peace process. We are still in the process. We are still waiting for the heads of State to come out not only with a full report on their investigations but also with their proposals for a peaceful solution. As we have said, we have cooperated in the past, and we will continue to cooperate in the future in search of a peaceful solution.

But there are threats every day, guns actually pointed at our head, being told every day that Ethiopia has finalized its preparations for war, that Ethiopia actually is going to evict us, the Eritreans, out of our own land — lands that clearly are within Eritrea. We have been saying that we are ready to demilitarize all disputed areas in the interest of a peaceful solution: demilitarization by both sides of the entire border, all disputed areas, and we are ready to have an international monitoring body in this area until we peacefully demarcate the border.

All this is very clear to the Ethiopian Government. Despite this, Ethiopia has made conditions and says that unless its conditions are unconditionally, unilaterally met by Eritrea, that unless Eritrea withdraws, they will make it do so by force. And he repeated it again.

We are prepared to defend our right as well. It is our duty and right to defend our own territory, as we are doing. And we will continue to do this despite the threats of the Ethiopian Government. But it is these threats, this use of force, this reliance on the use of force that really has been the crux of the problem from the outset up until now. This is being repeated every day by Ethiopia's leaders.

What kind of a peaceful atmosphere is this? What kind of a conducive atmosphere to a peaceful solution of the issue can this provide? Under intimidation? Under threats that are repeated daily by Ethiopia's leaders?

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in exercise of the right of reply.

I should like to inform members that a draft resolution on this item will be submitted to the Secretariat at a later date.

Agenda item 113

Programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/485)

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Fifth Committee that is before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote or position.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendation of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind Members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I also remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendation contained in the report of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take a decision in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The draft resolution is entitled "Analysis of savings resulting from the improved overall cost-effectiveness achieved pursuant to the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, including the restructuring of the intergovernmental machinery and the reform of the Secretariat, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/220 of 22 December 1997 and proposals pursuant to General Assembly decision 52/462 of 31 March 1998". The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/3).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 113.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.

United Nations A/53/PV.37

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

37th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 14 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 29

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/320 and Add.1 and 2)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.6)

The Acting President: I first call on Mr. Roberto Robaina Gonzalez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.6.

Mr. Robaina Gonzalez (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Blind and deaf, the United States of America continues to ignore the demands made by this Assembly for six successive years to put an end to its long, harsh and merciless economic, commercial and financial war against Cuba.

Year after year, the mandate of humanity has been as follows: in 1992, 59 votes in favour of a resolution condemning the United States blockade against Cuba and 3 against, with the remaining countries either abstaining or absent; in 1993, 88 votes in favour and 4 against; in 1994, 101 votes in favour and 2 against; in 1995, 117 votes in favour and 3 against; in 1996, 137 votes in favour and 3 against; and in 1997, 143 votes in favour and 3 against.

Each of these decisions was historic. The first resolution was adopted at a time when the triumphalist intoxication over the demise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Eastern Europe was sentencing the Cuban revolution to death, and the bets on the imminent fall of the Government in Havana were as frequent as the bags being packed and the travel being booked to attend a party of vultures that would supposedly feast on the remains and spoils of our dreams of independence and justice.

Those who never doubted us, those who feared for our fate and those who have always supported us, trusting in our will power, resolve and strength, have seen their hopes rekindled. Cuba has not only endured; Cuba and its people have managed to survive the so-called end of history and harassment by the mightiest Power of all time.

These rooms and corridors have witnessed abusive pressures, blackmail and threats to foil any Cuban proposition. Quite a few countries have lost credit facilities, seen business and trade transactions cancelled or sustained political retaliation, even for merely abstaining or choosing to be absent during the ballot.

In the midst of these realities, and in spite of repeated and almost unanimous resolutions passed by this

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General Assembly against the blockade, the infamous Helms-Burton Act was passed, as an attempt by the United States to enshrine hegemony, extraterritoriality and unilateralism in international law, and in a manner that makes a mockery of the United States allies, tramples on United States partners and humiliates other States.

This legislation has had a brutal impact on Cuba, and since its enactment it has undermined the global trading system, the negotiations for a future multilateral investment agreement and the arrangements for international trust, including trust between the centres of world economic power, to such an extent that not even the main plaintiffs representing nationalized American companies support it today.

The world, which had opposed this Act from its inception, has come to recognize that the extraterritorial nature of this law sustaining the blockade goes beyond the intents of Chapters III and IV, which affect third parties. A United States law has no jurisdiction over any foreign country in the world, including Cuba. Therefore, the grounds that support Chapters I and II are also illegal.

The main target of the intensified blockade has been external financing. Severing all Cuban access to sources of financing by international institutions or individual countries has become an obsession. As is well known, finance is the lifeblood of any economy. Without it, a country cannot exist. No one can imagine the abusive or risky conditions that Cuba has been forced to accept in order to receive loans. In its sugar industry alone the impact has been dramatic, with Draconian interest rates for loans, extremely short terms and ruinous repayment conditions.

We are not the only ones to say so. The head of the office for Cuban affairs of the United States State Department has said that

> "since the passage of the [Helms-Burton] law, 19 firms from more than six countries have changed their investment plans in Cuba or have pulled out their investments from that country ... The Cuban Government has encountered major difficulties in obtaining financing and attracting potential investors, and interest rates have increased up to 22 per cent"; moreover, "12 companies from more than seven countries are currently under investigation for their involvement in Cuba",

with a view to exerting pressure upon them.

The actual damage has been much greater than described by that United States official. The American World Health Association (AAWH), a recognizably independent non-governmental organization, submitted the findings of its year-long research on the impact of the blockade on the food and medicine sectors. The executive summary of this research, which was circulated in this Assembly, recorded in part that

> "the United States embargo has caused a significant rise in suffering in Cuba. For several decades, the United States embargo has imposed significant financial burdens on the Cuban health-care system. But since 1992, the number of unmet medical needs — patients going without essential drugs or doctors performing medical procedures without adequate equipment — has sharply accelerated ... The declining availability of foodstuffs, medicines and such basic medical supplies ... is taking a tragic human toll ... Finally, the AAWH wishes to emphasize the stringent nature of the United States trade embargo against Cuba. Few other embargoes in recent history ... have included an outright ban on the sale of food. Few other embargoes have so restricted medical commerce as to deny the availability of life-saving medicines to ordinary citizens. Such an embargo appears to violate the most basic international charters and conventions governing human rights, including the United Nations Charter, the charter of the Organization of American States, and the articles of the Geneva Convention governing the treatment of civilians during wartime."

I would add only that the United States Government, angered by this denunciation, fabricated a counter-report so gross, politicized and premeditatedly mendacious that it gave rise to complaints by United States and international agencies and was qualified in a document of the Congressional Ways and Means Committee as a deliberate attempt to cover up the charges made by the American World Health Association. The data on licenses granted for alleged trade with Cuba were altered, as was subsequently confirmed in reports from the Treasury and State Departments; statistics on trade with subsidiaries prior to 1992 were construed as being current; and companies such as Merck, and foreign and national individuals, were intimidated and sued.

Furthermore, the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization were misrepresented, since this counter-report concealed the fact that the

health-care share of blockaded Cuba's gross domestic product is the highest in Latin America and 34 per cent higher than that of the United States itself.

The congressional inquiry into this cynical counter-report concluded that

> "the State Department has the obligation to defend United States policy. But it does not have the obligation to purposely misrepresent the facts, especially if the misrepresentations and distortions are used to defend a policy of blocking" — note the acknowledgement of a blockade — "a civilian population's access to the basic necessities of life (food and medicine) in the midst of a severe economic crisis."

To go from bad to worse, only two weeks ago a United States ambassador was compelled to admit, impudently, to this Assembly that, since 1992, the United States had authorized over $2 billion in private humanitarian assistance to Cuba.

The information provided by various United States sources cites entirely different figures with regard to the licenses and supposedly authorized transactions included in the purported total of the $2 billion approved. At no time since the inception of the campaign to claim that the United States is the main donor of humanitarian assistance to Cuba has any United States official established the origin of this jumble of numbers, which fail to add up, or of the basis used by the United States Government to peg the Cuban-Americans' remittances at $2 billion.

The ambassador in question said that over $2 billion in private humanitarian assistance have been authorized for Cuba since 1992. He multiplied by 100 the humanitarian assistance sent by United States non-governmental institutions or individual Americans. In fact, even family remittances were banned throughout most of those years.

As Comrade Fidel said on 28 September:

> "Millions of people from all over the world send remittances to their relatives from the United States, Europe, the oil-producing countries, South Africa, Malaysia or any other country where they are working as foreign immigrants, and nowhere in the world have these remittances qualified as humanitarian assistance. That would be offensive to the senders and to the recipients' wives, children, parents, brothers and sisters.
>
> "Virtually every third world country receives remittances from relatives in the more developed countries. Family remittances also exist among developed countries. If that is what they are alluding to, then it is a disgrace. The dictionary cannot be amended in this fashion."

The true figures of United States humanitarian assistance — which is not sanctioned by the United States Government — actually received by Cuba and carefully accounted for by us to the penny, are as follows: From 1992 to 1997, donations from the United States — with and without licence — amounted to $23,559,086. Of this, 98 per cent was contributed by non-governmental and religious organizations that have been repressed for challenging the blockade with their actions; 1.1 per cent was in individual donations by friends of Cuba; and 0.6 per cent came from private institutions.

However, the world saw political and police repression within the United States turned against a group of United States civilian and religious organizations led by Pastors for Peace, which, defying the blockade bans, tried to forward Bibles, medicine and medical and computer equipment to Cuba. Cuba challenges United States representatives to come here and tell the Reverend Lucius Walker and his associates, who were beaten by customs officers and who went on a long hunger strike a few metres from the Mexican border until their donations were released, that their cargo was licensed to be sent to Cuba. Let them come and tell us that the famous yellow bus, earmarked for the charitable activities of a religious centre and whose tires they punctured to prevent its passage through customs at Laredo, was a Government donation. Let them come and tell it to the international agencies to which they are heavily indebted and for whose contributions they are now trying to take credit in a sudden and false display of paternity. Let them come and tell it to the Cuban emigrants who, risking fines or imprisonment or paying exorbitant sums for the use of third-country banks, sent remittances to their relatives.

Over the last few days, United States Government spokespersons have been engaged in a campaign of accusations against us for refusing to receive emergency food assistance that, albeit channelled through the World Food Programme, would be identified, monitored and conditioned by the United States. To accept crumbs from our executioner while the blockade becomes increasingly tight and merciless would not be worthy of a dignified people. Jose Martí taught us that poverty passes, but dishonour does not.

As the Cuban Government recently stated once again,

"We shall not receive that unworthy and disgraceful assistance, even if clear of conditionalities. What we demand is an end to the blockade; if the blockade is lifted, we will not require any humanitarian assistance from the Government that has blockaded us for almost 40 years and has waged an economic war against us, concentrating all its influence around the world on this war."

In disregarding limits or laws other than its own imperial interests, the United States is placing itself outside of international law. One year ago, 75 sovereign States, representing nearly half of the world's population, were threatened with over 40 unilateral and extraterritorial measures not only at the federal level but also at the state level, which were similar to the Helms-Burton Act and the blockade against Cuba.

Over 20 new measures against Cuba designed to include the guidelines of the Helms-Burton Act in other laws are being considered, and some have already been adopted this year. These measures not only reinforce legal bans already in existence, but they also add new, hostile, extraterritorial measures whose adoption is facilitated by the diverse, obscure and manipulated manners in which they are presented and adopted.

In fact, last March, after His Holiness Pope John Paul II, during his visit to Cuba, condemned the blockade as an unjust and ethically unacceptable action, the United States bombastically announced an alleged easing of measures to provide access to medicines and food and to facilitate travel to Cuba and remittances to relatives of Cuban-Americans, who are also victims of discriminatory treatment. It must be noted that the announcement of these measures did not mean that the United States has reconsidered its attitude in any way. It was just a publicity stunt filled with such complex and obstructive procedures that even United States Secretary of State Albright could not but concede that the economic pressure on Cuba would be maintained through the blockade and the Helms-Burton Act.

Seven months later, we have seen nothing that would indicate the implementation of the measures announced. Three months ago, Cuba placed orders with 10 United States pharmaceutical companies, as soon as a flexible licensing system for drug sales was officially declared. Some refused to sell, and others have not replied. An application to hold an auction of United States pharmaceuticals and medical technology in Havana, which would have constituted a standard means to build trade, was also turned down.

But, assuming that the sale of medicine is indeed authorized, how can the purchase be made? What bank can be involved without seizing Cuban money? Where can a credit account be opened, and who would accept it? What access would be accorded to Cuban importers to check their purchase specifications in accordance with international practice? What aircraft or vessels would we use, and what port or airport? Who would be the insurer? With so many impediments, what American company would be encouraged to apply for a licence?

Furthermore, three months ago three charter flight operators were authorized to fly to Cuba, and two of them recently had their licences withdrawn. This is the bare, tangible and observable reality.

The United States has certainly designed a blockade that, like a vile medieval garrotte, has managed with slow and pyrrhic success to bring about innumerable shortages to 11 million human beings and has greatly hampered the country's normal development. However, it has failed completely in its objective of toppling the Cuban Revolution and inciting the people to rise up against its leaders and the political and economic system we have freely chosen.

Ever since its founding, the United States has entertained the idea of seizing Cuba. A long list of names, plans and files have haunted us for more than 200 years: Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, Monroe, Wood, Platt, Magoon, Crowder, Sumner Wells, Caffery, Mack, Torricelli, Helms, Burton and Graham, as well as nine successive Administrations since 1959, all of which have always made the same mistake: to think about, legislate for and dream of ruling Cuba in English, while Cuba is thought of, ruled and legislated by Cubans in our own creative language.

We have grown and acquired awareness, suffering since our infancy the aggressiveness, arrogance and blockade of a country that has never wanted to recognize us as a free and sovereign people and that still sees us as a fruit that is supposed to ripen and fall into its claws, submitting to its designs.

The sacrifices imposed have never detracted from our sense of solidarity or our concern for the future of humankind. Hence, for more than 30 years, almost half

a million Cuban university-trained professionals, teachers, cooperative workers and soldiers have shared in the suffering of other peoples and, feeling it as their own, have helped overcome it.

In the health care sector alone, over 26,000 Cuban doctors and paramedics have provided services in scores of third world countries. Recently, after hurricane Georges killed more than 150 people in Haiti, comrade Fidel proposed that, if a country such as Canada, which has close ties with Haiti, or France, which also has close historical and cultural relations with Haiti, or the European Union countries or Japan, contributed medicines, then Cuba would be ready to send all the doctors required to save 15,000 children under the age of five per year, and no fewer than 10,000 people above that age: that is, 25,000 Haitian lives. Let us speak of human rights not only in words but in genuine, human deeds.

On behalf of my fellow Cubans who defended independence and carried the light of knowledge through the lands of the third world, and those who at present travel through that neglected human geography in order to lay the foundations of health, asking nothing in return.

On behalf of 402 doctors in South Africa who did not need English in order to do their job, for they have been able to learn from and cure peoples and ethnic groups in their own languages and dialects.

On behalf of those who rushed to the aid of the victims of earthquakes and hurricanes, such as the Cuban medical team that is currently stationed in a remote, devastated area of the Dominican Republic.

On behalf of all the Cuban health care workers and doctors needed to save 25,000 lives in Haiti, who are ready to join a global effort sponsored and organized by the World Health Organization of the United Nations system.

On behalf of the millions of fellow Cubans who do not have access to important cultural, informational, scientific and technological products, which are deliberately denied them.

On behalf of our leukaemia and cancer patients, as well as our oncologists and surgeons who do not have access to Oncaspar, as I mentioned here a few days ago, or to permanent subcutaneous catheters or other similar treatments.

On behalf of our AIDS patients who have no time to wait for us to obtain their costly medication.

On behalf of the elderly people in our intensive care units who do not artificial respirators and therefore cannot enjoy the extended life expectancy offered by the revolution's health care system.

On behalf of the sick who require certain third-generation antibiotics that we cannot acquire because most of them are under United States patents.

On behalf of our heart patients who are deprived of Aprotinin, Captopril and other coronary drugs, or pacemakers.

On behalf of a child who was on the brink of death before the very eyes of researchers from the United States, as a result of a serious mycosis that we did not have the medicine to cure, which is produced in the United States.

On behalf of our children who are not immunized because of obstacles to the purchase of the raw materials needed to produce vaccines.

On behalf of our farmers and agricultural workers whose crops fail to thrive because of shortages of fertilizers and pesticides supplied in the past but denied at present by subsidiaries of United States companies.

On behalf of all those whose jobs and salaries have been affected by the closing of factories that lack spare parts or raw materials.

On behalf of the many Cuban immigrants to the United States who are opposed to the blockade and whose rights to travel to Cuba and to communicate with and freely help their relatives are trampled by the prevention or restriction of contact with family members and normal relations with their homeland.

On behalf of companies from various countries, such as Bayer, Siemens, Nunc, Telectronics, Vitalmex, and of United States corporations such as Cargill, Continental Grains, Bristol-Myers, Eli Lilly, Johnson & Johnson, SmithKline Beecham and many others, which have been forced to cancel their sales to Cuba or which, as a result of persecution and discouragement, are now afraid to sell there.

On behalf also of the noble people of the United States, who are being deceived when they are told that the criminal blockade is being carried out in the name of freedom.

On behalf of the doctors from the United States who are shocked to see such devastation, the businessmen from the United States who wish to conduct free trade, the farmers in the United States who need to seek new markets for their products, the cheated taxpayers and the scientists, artists, intellectuals and ordinary individuals who need to learn about and engage in peaceful exchange with Cuba and who are in disagreement with the brutality and obstinacy of their rulers.

On behalf of justice, truth and all our rights that are being flagrantly and massively violated, those rights to which we are entitled and which we are determined to defend as human beings.

On behalf of the dignity, decency and independent voice of our people, heroic a thousand times over, which, though it has sustained $60 billion in damages, has not been defeated, humiliated or brought to its knees.

On behalf of the 11 million Cubans who do not beg but rather stand tall and demand an end to this dirty war, and who do not accept assistance that dishonours them, for they know they can rise and walk the world on their own.

On behalf of many peoples that may be the next victims, today or tomorrow, I ask the General Assembly once again to be just, and with the power of right, with heart and with honour, to demand that the United States put an end to its cruel blockade.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): By reason of its history and its convictions, Mexico is a country committed to peace, justice and equality. The principles of the United Nations Charter and of international law constitute the fundamental standard of our conduct in our relations with other States. This is enshrined in the political Constitution of the Republic of Mexico. That is why Mexico has not promulgated or implemented extraterritorial legal provisions. My country has always rejected the use of coercive measures as a means of exerting pressure in international relations.

My Government reaffirms that measures such as the Helms-Burton Act and its negative consequences are unacceptable under international law and constitute a violation of the purposes and principles to which we all committed ourselves by ratifying the Charter of the United Nations.

In the past six years, the General Assembly has urged Member States to refrain from promulgating or implementing extraterritorial laws or measures. It will do so today for the seventh time. This appeal, which embodies the imperative of reason, law and ethics, must not remain unheeded. It is an appeal for the harmony that must prevail in relations among all members of the international community. It is an international call that goes beyond borders, cultures, creeds and sensitivities. We want to establish dialogue and understanding between two countries to which we are joined by firm bonds of friendship. Today, as never before in human history, the challenges of globalization make it clear that we will be able to progress towards higher levels of peace and development only if we do so together, in the context of genuine international cooperation firmly founded on full respect for the sovereignty of all the nations of the world without exception.

The embargo against Cuba must end. Let us join our wills together in order to overcome this unpleasant show of intolerance without delay, as it has no place in the new millennium that we must build together. Only if we are united, respecting our differences and enriched by our diversity, will we be able to make the hopes of the founders of our Organization a reality and gain access to a fully human world that is the concrete synthesis of our shared aspirations for peace, justice and equality.

In accordance with our unswerving, principled position, the delegation of Mexico will vote in favour of the draft resolution in document A/53/L.6.

Mr. Amihamzah (Malaysia): For six consecutive years the General Assembly has adopted resolutions on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba. The adoption of resolution 52/10 by the General Assembly on 5 November 1997 by more than two thirds of the Members of the Organization reflected the wishes of an overwhelming number of States. My delegation is confident that the overwhelming rejection of the unilateral embargo on Cuba will continue.

Malaysia fully subscribes to the final document of the twelfth summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Durban in September 1998, wherein the heads of State or Government of the non-aligned countries reiterated their call upon the Government of the United States of

America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial action against Cuba. These unilateral actions are contrary to the United Nations Charter and to international law. They run counter to the principle of sovereignty and have caused huge material losses and economic damage to the people of Cuba.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/53/320. Virtually all the responses of the 58 States and of the relevant organs and agencies of the United Nations system included in the report have called for an end to the unilateral embargo on Cuba. This clearly reflects the common view that the extraterritorial application of what is essentially a domestic law infringes on the sovereignty and legitimate interest of other States. This application is also clearly inconsistent with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

Malaysia firmly believes that there is no justification for the continuation of the unilateral trade measures against Cuba that also impinge on the right of other States to engage in free trade and navigation. The promulgation of the Helms-Burton law in the United States also contravenes the principles and objectives of the World Trade Organization. It creates a bad precedent which is detrimental to the promotion of international trade. The Helms-Burton law, whose extraterritorial effects, like those of the D'Amato Act against Iran and Libya, violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States affected.

In the interest of upholding the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the promotion of free trade and equitable economic relations among states, Malaysia will, as in previous years, vote in favour of the draft resolution on this subject that is being considered by this Assembly.

Mr. Isakov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): For the last six years the results of our discussion in the General Assembly on the item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" have been convincing proof of the international community's increasing opposition to the application of such unilateral coercive measures. Virtually the entire international community, including Russia views the continuing trade and economic embargo against Cuba as a manifestation of an outdated mentality of the era of bloc confrontation.

Russia, which has since 1994 consistently supported the resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", again proclaims the unacceptability of attempts to exert pressure on third countries in order to limit their cooperation with Cuba through implementation of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 12 March 1996. This Act is rightly described by virtually the entire international community as discriminatory and contrary to the norms of international law and the principles of free trade.

Maintaining the embargo against Cuba is counter-productive and is fraught with negative humanitarian consequences for the people of that country.

In our view, lifting the embargo and bringing about détente in American-Cuban relations would strengthen stability in the Caribbean, help to fully integrate Cuba into the world economic system and facilitate its progress in instituting democratic and economic reforms. In this connection, we would like to note that, despite their limited nature, we regard the measures announced on 20 March 1998 by the United States Administration to liberalize regulations on humanitarian assistance to Cuba as a step in the right direction.

In conclusion, I should like to reaffirm that Russia, guided by the principles contained in the draft resolution — that is, sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of trade and international navigation — firmly intends to continue to develop normal trade and economic relations with Cuba based on mutual interest and advantage and carried out in strict compliance with generally accepted international norms, without any discrimination.

Mr. Effendi (Indonesia): My delegation has in the past pronounced itself against the imposition of unilateral economic and trade sanctions. We hold these to be incompatible with the sacrosanct principle of sovereignty of States and their legitimate interests. This is the primary reason why various international forums, including our Assembly, have called for the repeal of the laws in question.

In this context, it is pertinent to note that the twelfth summit meeting of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Durban last month, called upon the United States to terminate the economic, commercial and financial sanctions against Cuba, which, apart from being unilateral and contrary to the provisions of the Charter, have resulted in immense economic damage and material losses to the people of Cuba. It also called for

negotiations on the basis of equality and mutual respect to settle differences with Cuba.

Pursuant to resolution 52/10, Indonesia has provided information to the Secretary-General reaffirming its consistent policy of strict compliance with the principles of equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in internal affairs, as well as freedom of trade and international navigation. In line with this policy, Indonesia has opposed the promulgation and application of any laws and regulations that have extraterritorial effect or impinge upon the sovereignty of other States and the lawful interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction which is incompatible with generally accepted principles of international law.

For these reasons, my delegation has decided to vote in support of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.6.

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam): For the last six consecutive years the General Assembly has consistently attached the greatest importance to the item on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

Viet Nam, together with many other Member States, has voiced its strong support for the draft resolutions considered and adopted by the General Assembly under this important agenda item. This stems from our strong support for the fundamental principles of international law that govern relations between nations and the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

These resolutions, especially resolution 52/10, adopted at the last session, reflect the deep concern of Member States and the international community as a whole and their strong rejection of policies that resort to the application of extraterritorial laws and unilateral coercive measures imposed by one State against another State. These policies run counter to the most fundamental principles and purposes of the Charter, most important of all the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, and violates the freedom of international trade and navigation.

Viet Nam joins the international community in demanding an immediate and total end to these extraterritorial and confrontational policies of embargo and blockade, which have been imposed upon the Republic of Cuba for the last 40 years. We also share the common desire of the international community to build healthy international relations and cooperation on the basis of equality and respect for the right of every nation to choose its path of development and socio-political system. Viet Nam earnestly urges the General Assembly and all other bodies of the United Nations to take concrete measures and necessary efforts to that end.

Viet Nam believes that the dispute between the United States and the Republic of Cuba should be resolved through dialogue and negotiations in the spirit of mutual respect and respect for the independence and sovereignty of States. We, therefore, welcome the efforts of the concerned parties in this regard.

The international community does not accept the application of blockade policies and measures by one country against another country to interfere in the internal affairs of States and violate their sovereign right to choose their own paths of nation-building and development.

As in previous years, Viet Nam will vote in favour of the draft resolution on this item. Reaffirming our friendship, sympathy and solidarity with the Cuban people, we call on other Member States to support the text; their positive votes will mean support for truth and justice.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/53/320 and its two addenda. I am equally grateful to the Cuban delegation for introducing draft resolution A/53/L.6, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

Zambia has traditionally voted in favour of draft resolutions on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. We are going to maintain our positive vote this year. Our vote in favour of the draft resolution is based on our adherence to the Charter of the United Nations. We believe that, in accordance with the Charter, it is crucial to develop and maintain friendly relations among nations based on the principles of equal rights and of the self-determination of peoples. We also feel that it is the duty of every nation to use the machinery of international cooperation to solve emerging problems between and among nations.

In Zambia's view, the provisions of the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act and of the 1996 Helms-Burton Act imply extraterritorial jurisdiction with respect to their application. This, in our view, runs counter to international law. We feel that it is wrong for any country in the world to attempt to apply and enforce its national laws extraterritorially. Indeed, no country has the right to coerce other nations or to impose its will upon them. Otherwise, there would be no sovereign equality of States, just as there would be no room for international cooperation.

Against the background of what I have just said, I would like to state that Zambia has not promulgated or applied towards any country any domestic laws that would imply extraterritorial jurisdiction. On the contrary, we fulfil in good faith the obligations we assume in international agreements and conventions. To the extent possible, we also strive to give the commitments we make in international agreements the force of national law.

Zambia is also committed to promoting freedom of navigation and trade. As both a transit country and a landlocked country, Zambia has consistently reaffirmed the right of landlocked countries of access to and from the sea, and freedom of transit through the territory of transit States by all means of transport, in accordance with international law. We are also committed to developing rule-based trade with all other countries of the world, as far as our national capacities to import and export allow.

Zambia and Cuba maintain very warm relations. The two countries promote bilateral cooperation in various fields of socio-economic activity. Our cooperation is monitored and reviewed through a joint Commission of Cooperation which meets in the two countries' capitals on an alternating basis. Through that Commission, the Zambian and Cuban Governments aim to progressively improve the welfare of their peoples and to help contribute to attaining the objectives of some of the major United Nations international conferences.

I am pleased to note that our relations with Cuba are based on mutual respect and the principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs. We believe that these values are part of the foundation on which healthy relations between States should be built.

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana): At successive sessions over the past six years, the General Assembly has adopted, by an increasing majority, resolutions requesting an immediate end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba. It is a matter of deep regret that the United States has not only failed to comply with these requests but has continued to defy the international community by passing amendments to various laws, aimed at tightening the blockade against Cuba.

The delegation of Ghana wishes to reiterate its rejection of the embargo on Cuba, and more particularly the enactment and enforcement of laws with extraterritorial effects which affect the sovereignty of other States and the legitimate interests of entities and persons under their jurisdiction, as well as freedom of trade and navigation. All such legislation breaches the norms of international law and runs counter to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

As is generally known, and as was described by His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Cuba this morning, the embargo has gravely impeded Cuba's socio-economic development and has exacerbated the plight of millions of Cubans, especially those in vulnerable groups, such as women, children and the elderly. In financial terms, the losses amount so far to over $60 billion, which is about three times the value of Cuba's gross domestic product.

Nor are the adverse effects of the embargo limited to Cuba alone. The extraterritorial nature of the blockade damages the interests of companies of third countries by depriving them of the profits they could derive from their transactions with Cuba. Even non-governmental organizations are threatened by the embargo legislation. In fact, the entire international community, including the United States itself, is being denied access to certain benefits available in Cuba in such sensitive areas as health care, as evidenced by the prevarications of the United States authorities over the issuance of a license in respect of a Cuban vaccine adjudged by the World Health Organization to be the best in preventing meningitis B.

We acknowledge the recent announcement by the United States Government easing some aspects of the restrictions, namely the resumption of direct non-commercial flights and of limited monetary remittances from Cubans to their relatives on the island. These, however, are only half-hearted measures which fall far short of the overwhelming demand for the complete lifting of the economic blockade.

Cuba has the right, under international law and under the Charter of the United Nations, to choose whatever political, economic or social system it wishes to

live under. No country has the right to seek to change that system through coercive measures. The fact that Cuba continues to survive in the face of these measures and to elicit so much support and sympathy from the international community is a sure indictment of the utility of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on that country by the United States.

Ironically, the embargo is also an indictment on the United States own proclaimed policy of promoting global free trade. We therefore call upon the United States once more to lift the embargo and resort to peaceful resolution of any differences it has with Cuba. A negotiated settlement is the only means of ensuring lasting peace and good neighbourliness between the two countries.

Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): God Almighty says in the Holy Koran:

> "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other)." *[The Holy Koran, XLIX:13]*

We know that knowledge is the first step towards confidence-building, and that confidence is the building block of cooperation among peoples. Such were God's injunctions, but those who think that they can play God on Earth are doing precisely the contrary. They act against the will of God by adopting practices which run counter to His will and commands. They impose blockades, embargoes and exclusion. At times they even launch wars to achieve their political and non-political interests, which they want to dictate to all peoples. They do not want these peoples to utter the word "no".

I am sure that God chose the geographic location of Cuba. Perhaps Cubans, had they had the choice, would have preferred to be located elsewhere.

I have a very precise and important question: why was it decided to impose embargoes and blockades on Cuba? Who has the answer to such a simple question? Does Cuba represent a threat to the United States? Does Cuba commit acts of aggression against the United States? Has Cuba tried to assassinate American leaders? History shows that the contrary is the case. My own answer to this question is the following: these decisions were made against the Cuban people because the Cuban people chose to say no to the political and economic choices dictated to it. The Cuban people made its own choice by itself.

The democratic and political choice intended to be imposed on Cuba is the subject of criticism all over the world today. Here I present evidence for this from articles published in the United States since at least 1992. Since 1992, that is to say after the collapse of world equilibrium, both *Time* and *Foreign Affairs* have published numerous articles which concluded that there is an earnest search for a voter-based democracy and not a representative democracy.

The same applies to the economic choice. Suffice it here to say that one prominent figure of the capitalist system here in the United States said a few weeks ago that he saw capitalism crumbling. We can see proof of this in the various economic crises in all the continents of the world, which have been caused by the capitalist system. Why, then, are we imposing on Cuba a political and economic choice at a time when both of those choices are being gradually proven a failure?

The Cuban people has its own choices. We must therefore respect its freedom. My country firmly stands in support of the Cuban people and its leadership, not only by voting for the draft resolution before us, but by continuing to stand by them always with steadfastness.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): Since 1992 the General Assembly has been considering the agenda item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", and its successive resolutions have called for ending the embargo. Although the call for ending the embargo has grown from 59 in favour in 1992 to 143 in 1997 — representing 77 per cent of all Member States — the continued consideration of this item this year reminds us that the appeal of the international community is still going unheeded. It is highly regrettable that, much against the will of the international community, the blockade continues.

During the first half of 1998 there were some signs of improvement in the relationship between Cuba and the United States — namely, the announcement by the United States Administration of a few measures aimed at re-establishing direct flights, and limited transfers of funds by United States residents to their families in Cuba and reducing restrictions for the shipment of humanitarian donations of medicines and foodstuffs to Cuba. The agreement allowing Cuban commercial airlines to overfly the territory of the United States was an encouraging development. However, the blockade continues to press hard on Cuba's socio-economic situation.

The United Nations Children's Fund, in the report contained in document A/53/320, states that the situation of children in Cuba continues to be adversely affected by a number of internal and external factors, including the embargo. The situation of services in the public health system is critical, and women's health services in particular continue to be in serious decline. The blockade against Cuba is indeed cruel and unfair. It is highly deplorable that innocent people are being victimized for reasons no longer valid and sound. The delegation of Myanmar has consistently expressed its opposition to the unjust economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed against Cuba, which has adversely affected every aspect of the lives of 11 million people.

In the interest of upholding the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and to demonstrate our solidarity with the people of Cuba during this difficult time, the delegation of Myanmar, as in previous years, will vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.6.

Mr. Mapuranga (Zimbabwe): My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement which will be delivered this morning by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Assembly is meeting for the seventh consecutive year to consider the item before us. For nearly four decades now, the Government of Cuba has been appealing to the international community to assist in ending this debilitating embargo that is deliberately designed to strangle its economy.

My Government is dismayed that we have no immediate solution to offer the suffering Cuban people today, but are here to take action on the same draft resolution yet again. My delegation has taken the floor on several occasions in the past and does so now to call for an end to this totally unjustified embargo that has crippled the Cuban economy and endangered the lives of many innocent people, including the sick, the elderly and children, who have had to bear the brunt of this arbitrary and vindictive act.

In this post-cold-war era in which the basic norms of international law and peaceful coexistence among sovereign and independent nations are being espoused and openly proclaimed, it is ironic that we are having to grapple with the most basic breach of these fundamental norms of international law.

What has become even more disturbing in recent years has been the extraterritorial character and impact of this blockade, which borders on interference in freedom of international trade and navigation by sovereign States. Since the United Nations itself has not seen fit or deemed it necessary to take any such action against Cuba, it is the view of my delegation that all countries should be able fully to enjoy their economic, commercial and financial transactions with Cuba.

The mere fact that one country stands in ever-growing isolation on this matter should be a clear indication that the international community no longer accommodates such interference. Today it is Cuba; tomorrow it could be any of our countries.

Zimbabwe, like other members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, is guided by the Movement's longstanding position that the international community should resist all forms of interference, intervention, economic coercion and other measures, including extraterritorial laws, against developing countries to prevent them from exercising their right freely to determine their own political, economic and social systems.

At their last summit meeting, held in Durban, South Africa, this year, the non-aligned countries once more called for the lifting of the embargo against Cuba. Zimbabwe fervently hopes that constructive dialogue will take the place of the existing confrontation in the handling of this matter.

My delegation will therefore take its consistent position of voting in favour of the draft resolution now before the Assembly.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which are Members of the United Nations.

We join with those Member States that have expressed the need to bring an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

CARICOM States wish to reaffirm the importance which they attach to strict observance of the principles of international law and to freedom of trade and navigation. We remain opposed to the extraterritorial application of national legislation which would seek to impose artificial

barriers to trade and which denies the sovereign equality of States.

In keeping with a policy of mutual respect, good neighbourliness and respect for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, CARICOM countries have sought to expand and strengthen their relations with Cuba and have sought to promote Cuba's gradual economic integration into the subregion through functional cooperation and trade.

We believe that a constructive process of dialogue would remove the dangers of tension and conflict in the Caribbean and would improve the prospects for peaceful development in our region.

Accordingly, CARICOM countries support the contents of draft resolution A/53/L.6 and will vote in favour of its adoption.

Mr. Al-Hitti (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is regrettable indeed that the international community, in the body of the General Assembly, is forced to keeping examining this item on the agenda, despite the promulgation and adoption of six successive international resolutions all calling upon the United States to end its economic, commercial and financial embargo of Cuba.

The votes in favour of all these resolutions by an overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership — what amounts to 77 per cent of the Member States — reaffirm once again the international community's firm refusal to accept these measures and its belief that coercive unilateral measures contravene international law, violate the principles of legal equality among States, and run counter to the principles of respect for the sovereignty and dignity of States. Since the effects of such measures transcend the boundaries of the State promulgating them, these measures also constitute gross interference in the internal affairs of the targeted State or States and of other, third-party States.

All reports submitted by Cuba, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations state that the coercive measures which are still being imposed by the United States Government against Cuba gravely endanger the health, prosperity and human rights of the Cuban citizens. This is because of the paucity of medicine and foodstuffs that the Cuban citizens need. The fact that the United States coercive measures have cost the Cuban economy more than $60 billion reveals the considerable damage inflicted upon Cuban citizens without any ethical or legal justification.

We can realize the gravity of these United States measures if we put them in the context of the current United States policy, which since 1992 has imposed 61 economic sanction regimes against other States. Currently — not caring in the least for the disastrous impact sanctions have on civilians or the damage these sanctions cause to its own interests — the United States is imposing or threatening to impose sanctions against approximately 75 States, where half of the world's population lives.

We agree that the simplest human right recognized internationally is the non-utilization of food and medicine as weapons to apply political pressure. By the same token, the first requisite of democracy is to listen to the opinion of the majority on any issue under discussion. This has not been done by the United States in these cases. This means that Washington has abysmally failed to respect these principles, by which the rest of the international community abides.

Therefore, once again from this rostrum we call upon the United States Government to desist from this harmful and unjustifiable policy and to pursue a new policy that encourages dialogue and ensures the sovereignty of international law and of the Charter of the United Nations as regards the principle of settling disputes by peaceful means and that of the freedom of international trade.

We are quite hopeful that we would not be dealing with this item again at the next session of the General Assembly after a positive response by the United States to the will of the international community and to its sincere desire to terminate the long-lasting suffering of the Cuban people — a suffering that has lasted for a very long time.

Mr. Jele (South Africa): This body is meeting once again to consider the draft resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

On previous occasions this Assembly made a sufficiently compelling case for ending the embargo by recording a majority of votes in favour of the draft resolutions before the Member States. South Africa had then hoped that this overwhelming rejection would prompt the United States of America to consider lifting

the unilateral and unjustified embargo against Cuba. It is therefore a matter of concern that since the adoption of all these resolutions this Assembly has not witnessed any movement towards compliance with its decisions. On the contrary, the United States has not only adopted new measures aimed at tightening the embargo but also continues with the application of the extraterritorial Helms-Burton Act, designed to punish third countries and nationals who are in favour of trading with Cuba.

The maintenance of the embargo and extraterritorial measures has created the inescapable perception that the United States of America is bent on imposing its will on Cuba and other sovereign States. It is therefore critical for the international community to act with more vigour to end the embargo, which is blatantly in breach of the principles of the sovereignty of States, freedom of international trade and navigation, and all the other basic norms governing international relations enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

My delegation believes it is essential for both parties to undertake measures aimed at settling their differences by means of dialogue and negotiation on the basis of equality and mutual respect. It is also important to note that a growing number of important role-players, public bodies and intergovernmental forums have expressed disapproval of these punitive actions. This opposition by a broad spectrum of international public opinion has been given added weight and significance by the decisions of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the involvement of many public figures of the United States itself, thus providing convincing proof of the urgent need for the United States to end the economic and commercial stranglehold on Cuba.

The Assembly has the responsibility to ensure that the unjust embargo is lifted so that the Cuban people can live under conditions which are conducive to their uplifting.

South Africa will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Khalil (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The United Nations General Assembly has been looking at the issue of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba for the last five years, and the Assembly has been calling for its end. Today my delegation would like to express its grave concern at the continuation of the United States embargo against Cuba and against other countries suffering from similar economic and commercial sanctions unilaterally imposed by the United States.

Recently the United States imposed on my country similar unjust measures as a means of pressure on us to take us off the road we had chosen to pursue to achieve socio-economic development. This constitutes a grave violation of international law and the basic rules governing international relations. It also adversely affects the various aspects of life in countries suffering from such measures. Therefore, the Sudan rejects the utilization of economic sanctions as a means of achieving political purposes.

All the reports prepared by the Secretary-General, including the latest, in document A/53/320 of 3 September 1998, have highlighted the devastating effects of the embargo imposed on the Cuban people, especially in the vital sectors of the economy, such as health and agriculture.

One of the root causes for instability in the world is the attempt by some to transfer a given democratic paradigm to developing countries without taking into account their cultural and historical circumstances. We think unilateralism, whereby coercive measures are imposed, leads to the following effects: it hampers the flow of international trade; it places hurdles in the road of transfer of technology to the developing world; and it leads to aggression against innocent people, such as that which one of the main establishments in my country recently suffered. All of this defeats the spirit of San Francisco whereby this Organization was created in order for peoples to practise tolerance and coexistence among all States. If this was the spirit 50 years ago, we have more need for that spirit now, given globalization and the interconnectedness of the world, to build a better future, one characterized by complementarity and constructive interaction among all.

The various resolutions adopted by the United Nations call for the various States not to promulgate any extraterritorial laws. This is why my delegation calls for the lifting of the embargoes imposed on Cuba and on all other countries which have suffered the impact of these unilateral decisions. My delegation reiterates its support for the draft resolution before us. We believe that all problems should be settled on the basis of equality among States, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): The agenda item before us deals with a subject which, regrettably, has preoccupied this Assembly for a number of years. As in previous years, the delegation of the

United Republic of Tanzania is taking the floor in support of the draft resolution accompanying the item.

It is our firm belief that the international appeals and efforts employed on behalf of the Cuban people are necessary, justified and urgent. For a number of years, the General Assembly has stressed to the United States the need to end the embargo it imposed on Cuba as a step towards normalizing her relations with Cuba. Unfortunately, the appeal by the international community seems to be disregarded.

My delegation is becoming increasingly concerned that, in spite of six resolutions adopted by the international community through this Assembly, the embargo imposed upon Cuba by the United States remains in place. This continuing state of affairs is disappointing for two principal reasons: first, because it suggests that the series of resolutions adopted by the Assembly are inconsequential, and therefore it is a challenge to both the authority of the Assembly and the Charter of the United Nations. Secondly, it is a matter of serious regret that the sustained status quo has contributed to a situation of real human suffering in Cuba as a result of the undue burden imposed on the Government of Cuba.

Only recently, we witnessed with sympathy the unfortunate manner in which the embargo worked to hinder international cooperation in the form of humanitarian response to the tragedy brought about by hurricane Georges to the Cuban people.

This Assembly has taken a firm position on the legitimacy of the Helms-Burton Act passed by the United States Congress. The legislation is devoid of any legality under international law. Its illegitimacy is rooted not only in its pretension to extraterritorial application, but also in the fact that it seeks to hinder legitimate international trade and cooperation. We continue to stand opposed to that piece of legislation. No country should be encouraged to pursue unilateralism at the expense of fruitful international cooperation, nor should such pursuit be condoned. Indeed, in the era of globalization such actions are counter-productive.

My delegation is further concerned that there have been no credible measures to bring the parties to a dialogue, notwithstanding the fact that the cold war is over. The burden which Cuba has endured is in the interest neither of the people of the United States nor of those of Cuba. Indeed, the continuing existence of strained relations between the two countries, with both of whom my country enjoys friendly relations, is not in the interest of any one of us, including the United Nations.

We therefore continue to call on the United States to end the embargo imposed upon Cuba and build meaningful bridges between the two States for mutual understanding and the prosperity of their respective peoples. This would indeed contribute to amity.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): We are meeting today for the seventh consecutive year to discuss the item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

The constant position of the Syrian Arab Republic has always been and continues to be the deep belief in the right of States to exercise their sovereignty over their territories and non-interference in their internal affairs. This right is enshrined in the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, which is the constitution of this international organization and its point of reference.

For four decades, Cuba has suffered social, economic and political damage at the hands of the United States of America that has been of grave concern to the international community. It is high time to find a solution to this serious stalemate. Cuba has repeatedly called for the blockade to be lifted through dialogue. We support its sincere desire to open a constructive dialogue with the United States, on the basis of equality, mutual respect and good-neighbourly relations, to resolve all differences between the parties and ensure the prosperity of the two countries and peoples.

When we consider the results of the voting on the resolution under this agenda item over the past seven years, we see that 59 States voted in favour in 1992, a figure that rose to 143 in 1997. The number of abstentions declined from 71 in 1992 to 17 last year. Clearly, international support for the General Assembly resolution under this item is inexorably rising. This offers striking testimony to the need to lift the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba and to respect the political, social and economic systems freely chosen by each State in accordance with its legitimate national interests.

This is also clear evidence of the world's exasperation with double standards, discriminatory

measures, non-responsiveness to the calls made by the General Assembly in its previous resolutions, and the flouting of these resolutions. We reaffirm that any decision whose extraterritorial effects may infringe upon the sovereignty of other States is in contravention of the principle of respect for State sovereignty, as set forth in Article 2 of the United Nations Charter. In this context, we reiterate the statement issued at the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Durban, South Africa, in September this year, calling on the United States to end this protracted blockade, which contravenes the United Nations Charter and international law. The continuation of the blockade and other measures imposed against Cuba have harmed that country and its people, especially its children, and widened the chasm between it and the United States.

Resolution 52/10, adopted on this subject last year with 143 votes in favour, is an important democratic indicator and should be a powerful impetus to the supporters of democracy to lift the embargo against Cuba. The international community has repeatedly rejected the American Helms-Burton Act, an extraterritorial law that flouts the need to respect the sovereignty of States which deal with Cuba. That law and other related legislative acts ignore the basic principle of respect for State sovereignty and violate the United Nations Charter and international law. It also impedes the freedom of international commerce and navigation sought by the United States. Furthermore, it contravenes the will of peoples.

My delegation will therefore support the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.6, now before the Assembly for consideration.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): The Government of Namibia will once again associate itself with the call of the General Assembly on States to refrain from the promulgation and application of laws and regulations with extraterritorial effects on the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, and the freedom of trade and navigation. In this connection, Namibia has not and will not promulgate or apply any laws or regulations against Cuba — or any other country, for that matter — that would prevent economic, commercial or financial activities from taking place between it and other countries.

The Government of Namibia views with great concern non-compliance with relevant General Assembly resolutions which seek to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States of America against the people of Cuba. In the same vein, Namibia views the Helms-Burton Act as a violation of the sovereignty of States, a breach of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, freedom of trade and navigation, and also as a violation of the international trading system. How can you talk of globalization while at the same time imposing limitations on the freedom of trade and investment?

Because of its full respect for the sovereignty of States and the principle of self-determination of peoples, and in recognition of the norms and principles which govern peaceful and friendly cooperation among nations, the Government of Namibia expresses its full solidarity with the people of Cuba and calls for the embargo that has been imposed on them for more than 30 years to be lifted.

The impact of the embargo is well documented and known. What one should ask now is: How much suffering must the people of Cuba endure before the lifting of this embargo? How many more lives should be lost through the unavailability of basic medicines and medical equipment before we heed the call?

The Government of Namibia reaffirms its commitment to the elimination and total lifting of the embargo against Cuba and will vote in favour of the draft resolution in document A/53/L.6, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*interpretation from French*): For seven years now, the General Assembly has felt compelled to consider the question of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. My delegation deeply regrets that the two parties concerned have not yet been able to resolve this question.

At the summit conference held in Durban, South Africa, in September 1998, the heads of State or Government of the non-aligned countries again called upon the United States Government to terminate the economic, commercial and financial measures against Cuba, which run counter to the United Nations Charter, international law and the principle of good neighbourliness and which cause material losses as well as considerable economic damage to the Cuban people. The United States is also asked to resolve its differences with Cuba through negotiation based on equality and

mutual respect, pursuant to the relevant General Assembly resolutions. In this context, the Lao People's Democratic Republic believes that it would be in the interest of peace and development in that region of the world, as it would be in the interest of both the American and the Cuban peoples, for the two parties to continue seriously their negotiations in order to resolve their problem as soon as possible, which would be in step with the current world trend towards dialogue and international economic cooperation.

My country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, has always opposed the taking of unilateral coercive and economic measures in international relations. The economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States of America more than 30 years ago has not only hampered the economic and social development of the island, but has also hampered trade and normal economic relations between Cuba and a number of other countries. On the basis of the principles of sovereign equality among States, non-interference in the internal affairs of others and freedom of trade and international navigation, the
Lao People's Democratic Republic believes it is high time the blockade was lifted and the two countries, the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba, improved their relations as soon as possible, which would help strengthen stability in the region and would assist Cuba, a developing country, to better integrate itself into the globalized and liberalized world economy.

Accordingly, the delegation of Laos wishes to express its support for the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.6, introduced by Cuba.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I call on the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on a point of order.

Mr. Ri (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Before we proceed to the voting, my delegation wishes to ask the Secretariat to make a clarification.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/53/320) contains the replies received from Governments as of 13 August 1998. My Government's reply to the Secretary-General in support of resolution 52/10 was dated 17 March 1998. However, my delegation could not find that reply in the report of the Secretary-General. So my delegation asks the Secretariat to reproduce the report of the Secretary-General so that it will contain the reply of my Government.

The Acting President: I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. His comments have been taken note of and the Secretariat will take the appropriate action to correct that omission.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/53/L.6.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote before the voting.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Manz (Austria): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union with reference to the draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

Let me reiterate on this occasion that with regard to Cuba, the European Union considers a process of transition to pluralistic democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as a sustainable recovery and improvement in the living standards of the Cuban people, as matters of priority. The European Union recognizes that some positive developments have taken place, but continues to be concerned about the political and economic situation in Cuba and expresses its hope for durable and substantive improvements.

The European Union considered both the visit to Cuba of Pope John Paul II and the release of political prisoners in response to the Pope's appeal as positive steps towards greater religious and civic freedom, and looks for this process to continue. However, we deplore the detention of a considerable number of people, including the four leading members of the Internal Dissidence Working Group, who have exercised in a non-violent manner their rights to freedom of expression and association.

The European Union emphasizes the fundamental responsibilities of the Cuban authorities regarding human rights, such as freedom of thought, opinion and expression, assembly and association, as well as rights associated with the administration of justice, and, in this connection, urges them to liberate and fully reintegrate into society all prisoners of conscience. We appeal to the Cuban authorities to fully cooperate with international human rights bodies and mechanisms.

The European Union acknowledges that steps towards better economic integration have been taken by the Cuban Government and stresses the need for a progressive and irreversible opening of the Cuban economy. The European Union reiterates its wish to be Cuba's partner in such a process. However, its full cooperation with Cuba will depend upon improvements in human rights and political freedom.

As expressed in the European Union Common Position of 2 December 1996, it is not our policy to bring about change by coercive measures with the effect of increasing the economic hardship of the Cuban people.

The European Union believes that United States trade policy towards Cuba is principally a matter for those two Governments. But the European Union has made clear its opposition to the extraterritorial extension of the United States embargo, such as that contained in the so-called Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996.

Furthermore, we wish to reaffirm that the European Union's strong opposition, based both on law and on principle, to the imposition of secondary boycotts and legislation with extraterritorial effect and retroactivity remains unchanged.

In November 1996 the Council of Ministers of the European Union adopted a regulation and a joint action to protect the interests of natural or legal persons resident in the European Union against the extraterritorial effects of the Helms-Burton legislation, which prohibit compliance with that legislation.

On 18 May 1998, at the European Union/United States summit in London, a package was agreed with regard to United States sanctions laws, including a commitment by the United States Administration to resist future extraterritorial legislation of this kind and an understanding with respect to disciplines for the strengthening of investment protection.

The European Union takes the view that this represents an important step forward towards resolving our differences with the United States on this matter. We emphasize, however, that the European Union's commitment to implementing the package must be matched by the United States. We look forward to further progress in this area.

For all these reasons, the member States of the European Union will unanimously support the draft resolution before us today.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Argentina wishes to express its concern over the persistent economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba, which affects the legitimate interests of persons and entities and undermines freedom and the flows of trade and investments.

Lifting the embargo is the best instrument for promoting freedom of trade, communications, flexibility and dialogue, including critical dialogue, and is the most viable means of promoting changes in Cuba towards representative democracy, which we believe is the system that guarantees the fundamental freedoms of citizens.

For these reasons, the delegation of Argentina will vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.6.

Mr. Valle (Brazil): I take this opportunity to reiterate the principles that have guided Brazil in its consideration of this issue, as we once again will vote in favour of the draft resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

The settlement of disputes between States must be undertaken first of all through peaceful means. Any other, forcible measures, such as sanctions or embargoes, which constitute exceptions to this general rule should be resorted to only when all other means have been exhausted and, in any case must, be solidly based on international law.

Sanctions and embargoes that contradict international law instead of contributing to resolving a specific dispute raise more tensions. If they affect the interests of third States, as in the case currently under the scrutiny of the General Assembly, the international community has even more reason for concern. The so-called Cuban Liberty and Solidarity Act in force in the United States of America has been rejected in a number of international forums, *inter alia*, the Organization of American States, the Rio Group, the Ibero-American Summit and the Latin American Economic System. It is also inconsistent with the legal obligations of the members of the World Trade Organization.

Brazil joins the near unanimity of the international community in rejecting this unilateral measure. Apart from the legal aspect, we do not believe it contributes to the goal of the full reinsertion of Cuba in the inter-American system.

Mr. Yu Qingtai (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The General Assembly has repeatedly adopted resolutions calling upon all countries to cease to implement laws that are contrary to the principles contained in the Charter and the basic norms of international relations or detrimental to the legitimate economic interests of third countries. It is regrettable that the Government of the United States of America has not responded positively to this appeal from the international community and has persisted in refusing to implement the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

The sanctions and embargoes by the United States over the years have created great difficulties for the Cuban people's endeavours to achieve economic and social development, as well as their restructuring process.

As a consequence, improvements in the living standards of the Cuban people have been hampered, with particularly harmful effects on the health and well-being of women and children. This is a clear violation of the human rights of the people of another country.

Furthermore, the unilateral actions by the United States have also obstructed normal economic and trade relations between Cuba and many other countries, causing damage to their legitimate rights and interests.

With the cold war now quite a few years behind us, this situation should not be allowed to continue. History has shown us that differences between nations can be settled effectively only through dialogue and negotiations on the basis of equality and respect for each other's independent choices. It is our hope that the United States will take constructive actions in line with the prevailing trend of our era.

On the basis of the foregoing, the Chinese delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Crighton (Australia): Although Australia shares the concerns of some Member States about the situation with respect to human rights and political freedom in Cuba, we do not consider that isolating Cuba through economic sanctions is an effective means of achieving human rights and political reform.

Australia has consistently expressed its principled opposition to the promulgation and application by States Members of the United Nations of laws and measures whose extraterritorial effects affect the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction and freedom of trade and navigation. In Australia's view, such laws and measures are not justified by the principles of international law. Australia is concerned about the unilateral, extraterritorial aspects of the Helms-Burton Act of 1996, which codifies and broadens the embargo by targeting foreign investors in Cuba.

For that reason, Australia will vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): The protection and promotion of human rights is a cornerstone of Norwegian foreign policy and a focal point of the dialogue we maintain with other countries. We deplore violations of civil and political rights and remain concerned about the situation in Cuba. We do not consider isolation through unilateral measures, such as the embargo under discussion, to be an appropriate response to the situation in Cuba. Norway believes that more is to be achieved through constructive dialogue in which no theme should be excluded. We are at present engaged in such a constructive and open dialogue with the Cuban authorities — a dialogue that includes a number of themes, *inter alia*, human rights.

The Norwegian Government believes there is a clear distinction between unilateral measures and sanctions adopted by the international community through the United Nations. Only sanctions adopted by the international community through relevant and representative organizations have the necessary legitimacy, and no country should impose its legislation on third countries. Therefore, Norway will again this year vote in favour of the draft resolution to end the embargo against Cuba, while, as stated, not in any way condoning violations of human rights in Cuba.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Costa Rica will vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.6, which calls for the lifting of the unilateral economic, commercial and financial measures against Cuba.

On this occasion, as in previous years, we base our position on unflinching support for the principles of non-intervention and respect for the self-determination of

peoples. Such principles constitute a cornerstone of the international system and are embodied in the Charter of our Organization. On previous occasions in this forum we have stated that Costa Rica rejects interference in affairs that are for Cubans themselves to resolve; only they should decide what to do.

As we affirmed during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, we may agree or disagree with what the Cubans have decided — or not decided — to do, but it is not for third parties to exert material pressure to alter the self-determination of the Cuban people, especially when such actions damage the very living conditions of the citizens of the island.

In this connection, I can also affirm that my country is not satisfied with the human rights situation in Cuba and does not agree with the policy implemented by the Cuban Government to limit the civil and political rights of the citizens of the country. However, Costa Rica does not believe that actions such as the so-called Helms-Burton Act, and other similar measures that involve the extraterritorial application of the legislation of a State, can be justified in the name of resolving the problems of Cuba.

We regret that an attempt is being made to limit international commerce and economic activities without valid justification and contrary to the legal structures on which the United Nations is based. That is why we join with those who believe that such unilateral actions must cease.

Mr. Ri (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is of the view that the continued blockade by the United States against the people of Cuba over the past 30 years is a violation of the agreed principles of respect for sovereign equality and non-interference — the very purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and other relevant norms covering international relations. Every country has the right to choose its own social system and mode of development. No country has the right to impose its will upon other countries. My delegation urges that the unreasonable and unjust unilateral blockade against the people of Cuba and other countries be immediately put to an end. My delegation will render its vote of support.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Republic of Belarus has always been in favour of strict compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In this connection, the Government of the Republic of Belarus supports the appeal of the General Assembly to refrain from the adoption and application of laws and measures designed to limit freedom of international trade or which affect the sovereignty of other States and harm the legitimate interests of juridical and physical entities or persons. The Republic of Belarus has always been in favour of the peaceful settlement of disputes between States through negotiation. In this connection, we support the creation of favourable conditions for the unlimited development of economic cooperation and other links between Cuba and all other countries, including the United States. We support the appeal of the international community not to adopt laws and measures aimed against other States. In this connection, our delegation will support the draft resolution that is before us in document A/53/L.6.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): Our concern with Cuba results from the Cuban Government's systematic denial of universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms to the people of Cuba. We are proud to promote and support democracy around the world; it is the dictators and repressers of human rights who should be defensive and ashamed.

Cuba continues to trample on the fundamental freedoms of its people, the rights and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United States believes that economic sanctions are an important foreign policy tool to be used in certain compelling cases. In the case of Cuba, sanctions are but one element of a broad policy aimed at promoting a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba. We have asked the international community to join us in a truly multilateral effort to achieve that goal.

Important issues are at stake for the United States in Cuba, which lies only 90 miles from our shores. But important interests are also at stake for friends throughout the western hemisphere and for the broader community of democracies.

Year after year the Cuban Government has manipulated the concerns expressed in this Hall to claim support for its repressive and failed policies. The record, however, is clear: dozens of dissidents and human rights advocates have been detained and arrested over the past year. Recently, the four courageous leaders of the "dissident Working Group" were charged with alleged sedition and acts against State security. Their only crime, however, was to criticize the Government's failed

economic policies and to call for peaceful democratic change.

Rather than accepting the mistaken premise of this draft resolution, the United States urges nations committed to democracy and human rights to join us in forging a multilateral effort to promote a peaceful democratic transition in Cuba.

In addition to maintaining pressure on the Cuban Government for change, the United States believes it is particularly important to reach out to the Cuban people. Assisting the Cuban people to develop independent civil society will help ensure that the transition which will inevitably take place in Cuba will be peaceful and democratic. This effort to support the Cuban people recognizes that change in Cuba must come from within, led by Cubans on the island who recognize the problems and injustices of the current system. They need and deserve the support of the international community.

Support for the Cuban people has been and remains a central thrust of United States policy. In October 1995 and March 1998, President Clinton announced measures which significantly expanded those efforts. Thousands of Cuban doctors, scientists, environmentalists, academics, students, researchers, artists, religious workers and others have travelled to the United States, and hundreds of Americans have legally travelled to Cuba for similar purposes. Dozens of non-governmental groups in the United States are engaged in projects with independent Cuban groups, and the United States has licensed over $2 billion in private humanitarian assistance from United States non-governmental organizations and individuals to the people of Cuba. Much of the assistance which has been and is being licensed is medicine, medical equipment and food.

With the support of countries that share our commitment to advancing peaceful change in Cuba, the Cuban people can nurture the hope of a brighter future. The United States calls on this body to dedicate its efforts to advancing the cause of freedom and human rights in Cuba and to increasing support to those on the island who yearn for democratic change.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.6.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

El Salvador, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Republic of Korea, Senegal, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uzbekistan

The draft resolution was adopted by 157 votes to 2, with 12 abstentions (resolution 53/4).

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Duval (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): Canada voted in favour of draft resolution A/53/L.6 because we firmly oppose the attempt by the United States to force sovereign States to change their politics towards Cuba by applying the so-called Helms-Burton Act to give itself extraterritorial jurisdiction through internal legislation.

That being said, the blockade applied by the United States cannot alone be held responsible for the difficulties being experienced by Cuba. We underscore today, as we have in the past, our concern with regard to the lack of respect by the Cuban Government for the rights of the Cuban population, and we continue regularly to raise our concerns in this respect in talks with the Cuban Government.

Mr. Arcaya-Smith (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Venezuela, in keeping with its constitutional principles of peace and peaceful coexistence among nations on the basis of respect for the norms of international law, once again rejects the application of unilateral coercive measures that violate sovereignty and affect the legitimate interests of entities or citizens under the jurisdiction of third parties and that undermine the rules of free trade among nations, as stipulated in the constitution of the World Trade Organization.

This position, which our country has maintained unchanged since 1992 in the General Assembly, has been reiterated on various occasions in forums and political mechanisms for consultation and accord, such as the Rio Group and the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State or Government.

In this regard, we wish to highlight that, at the twelfth summit of the Rio Group, held in Panama last September, the Heads of State or Government strongly rejected the unilateral and extraterritorial application of national laws, since this constitutes a violation of fundamental principles of international law and coexistence and have a negative impact on cooperation, trade and investments among countries.

In like manner, at the seventh Ibero-American Summit, held on Margarita Island in November 1997, the Heads of State or Government stated that they rejected the application of the law known as the Helms-Burton Act, since they considered that that legislation violates the principles governing international coexistence and runs counter to the spirit of cooperation and friendship that should prevail in relations among all members of the international community.

At a time when the international community is making progress in the search for new formulas of cooperation and understanding, it is inconsistent with reality to accept the resolution of bilateral differences through economic and military coercive actions or through any other form of pressure that undermines the sovereignty and independence of nations and is detrimental to peoples without affecting the regime against which they are imposed.

For these reasons, Venezuela, once again this year voted in favour of the draft resolution on this issue, on the basis of respect for international law. Our decision should not be interpreted as support for any regime in particular, since we believe that the arguments set forth are legitimate and apply to any political situation of any relevant country.

However, being a democratic, pluralistic nation that defends human rights, we wish at this time to repeat that Venezuela remains convinced that only through cooperation and dialogue will it be possible to bring about the necessary changes for democracy and fundamental freedoms, which we all desire.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): Japan shares the concern expressed by many other countries regarding the problem of extraterritorial application of jurisdiction, such as that arising from the Helms-Burton Act. My Government has been following closely the implementation of the legislation, as well as the circumstances surrounding it, and its concerns remain unchanged. Thus, having considered the matter with the utmost care, Japan voted in favour of draft resolution A/53/L.6.

I would like to take this opportunity to refer to the human rights situation in Cuba. My Government welcomes the release of prisoners, including political prisoners, by the Government of Cuba in March this

year, in response to the requests made by the international community, and most notably by the Vatican. But, with restrictions on political activities and on freedom of assembly, association and expression, there has been no fundamental progress towards democratization, the human rights situation or respect for individual rights. Japan remains concerned at the current situation and continues to hope that it will be improved.

While Japan supports the resolution, we believe it might be worth considering whether the United Nations General Assembly is in fact the most suitable forum in which to address this very complex issue. As regards the economic embargo by the United States against Cuba, Japan believes that it is appropriate for both countries to seek a solution through bilateral dialogue and thus calls upon them to strengthen efforts towards that end.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

May I take it that is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 29?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

United Nations A/53/PV.38

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

38th plenary meeting
Thursday, 15 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 158

World Solar Programme 1996-2005

Draft resolution (A/53/L.8)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Zimbabwe to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.8.

Mr. Mapuranga (Zimbabwe): Zimbabwe, along with other Members of the United Nations, proposed the inclusion of the item on the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 in the current agenda of the General Assembly. There is also a draft resolution prepared and circulated on this item.

This item is of particular concern to Zimbabwe, as it is to many other States Members of the United Nations. President Mugabe is the Chairman of the World Solar Commission, a body composed of 18 heads of State and Government that, since its establishment in 1994, has overseen and guided the preparation of the World Solar Programme, which it approved in June last year. The Programme is before us today in document A/53/395.

The World Solar Programme 1996-2005, which was launched at the World Solar Summit held in Harare in September 1996, represents a major effort for the promotion of all forms of renewable energy — bearing in mind, here, that the term "solar" is utilized in a generic sense to encompass other renewable sources of energy. The Programme reflects the political will of the 104 national delegations that attended the World Solar Summit and constitutes an important contribution to the struggle for the achievement of sustainable development.

It would be useful to briefly observe that, in the World Solar Programme, particular emphasis is placed on the mandates and recommendations of both Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development — the Earth Summit — of 1992 and the 1981 Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy. While the Nairobi Programme of Action provided specific energy-related policies and programmes in a number of areas, including energy assessment and planning, transfer, adoption and application of mature technologies, research, development and demonstration, as well as education and training, the Earth Summit also discussed energy and explicitly concluded that energy was essential to economic and social development and improved quality of life. Indeed, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change relates its implementation to the energy policies of the Parties to the Convention, and energy has received the attention of other subsequent major United Nations conferences, including the 1994 Global Conference on the Sustainable

98-86089 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Development of Small Island Developing States, as one of the factors for furthering sustainable development.

Taking into account the recommendations which emerged from these major conferences, we feel that the preparatory process which led to the World Solar Summit and the subsequent adoption of the World Solar Programme lay on a firm foundation. The Programme was prepared on the basis of the outline approved by the Summit and the commitments contained in the Harare Declaration on Solar Energy and Sustainable Development, also adopted at the Summit, containing a series of recommendations for actions to be undertaken at the national and international levels. The Programme also contains global, regional and national renewable energy projects to be implemented as a joint effort of Governments, interested and relevant organizations and agencies, the private sector, international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations.

The implementation of many of the more than 400 high-priority national projects is already under way, with international financial assistance of some $400 million being provided. Let me hasten to add, in this regard, that many other national projects are being implemented with national funding, both public and private, from the concerned countries themselves.

We are convinced that, on the one hand, the increased utilization of renewable energies — and I mean here solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, tidal and so forth — will meet the increasing concerns of both industrialized and developing countries with the preservation of the environment and the interests of posterity and future generations. On the other hand, it will address the urgent need to provide access to basic energy services, for cooking, lighting, heating, cooling and so forth, to the more than 2 billion people who do not benefit from such an elementary necessity of life. Many of these men, women and children live in rural areas, remote regions or island habitats where they can only have recourse to solar, wind and other forms of renewable energies.

One of the United Nations specialized agencies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has already adopted — at the last session of its General Conference in 1997 — a resolution endorsing the World Solar Programme and inviting all Member States to contribute to the success of its implementation, with special emphasis on education and training. Several successful inter-agency consultations have been organized by the World Solar Commission, and several agreements have already been concluded.

The President of Zimbabwe and the other heads of State and Government who are members of the World Solar Commission believe that the time has now come for the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a resolution in support of the World Solar Programme. The endorsement of the World Solar Programme by the General Assembly of the United Nations would constitute a major contribution to its successful implementation. It would also enhance the attainment of the objective of sustainable development and would constitute a recognition of the work of the World Solar Commission in the promotion of the use of renewable energies. The strategic importance of the World Solar Programme to both developing and developed countries cannot be overemphasized.

The Programme is a tangible demonstration by the World Solar Commission and others that have supported the World Solar Summit process that they recognize that achieving a sustainable energy future is an enormous challenge which requires the contribution of all concerned parties, Governments, the international community, the private sector, academia and non-governmental organizations. Our major objective in this endeavour should be that of a significant shift towards environmentally sound energy sources and technologies, including the expanded use of renewable sources of energy.

Turning now to the draft resolution itself, it will be noted that the preambular part basically highlights the major mandates which have been the guiding principles behind this process: Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the World Solar Summit itself and the resolution adopted by the UNESCO General Conference endorsing the World Solar Programme. Also noted with appreciation in the preambular part is the support so far demonstrated by some developed countries in this process. The issue of energy will be a major topic in the discussions of the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2001, and that very important fact has been highlighted in this section of the draft resolution.

In the operative part of the draft resolution, the guiding role which has been assumed by the World Solar Commission is taken cognizance of. It is also in this section that the General Assembly would endorse the Programme and invite all Member States of the United Nations to contribute to its successful implementation. The Secretary-General would be invited to take certain actions, in consultation with UNESCO and in close

cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme and other relevant organizations, in order to ensure that the Programme is integrated into the United Nations efforts to bring about sustainable development, to bring the Programme to the attention of funding and technical assistance sources and seek their contribution to its implementation and to continue to sensitize and generate greater awareness among Member States and international, regional and national institutions of the strategic importance of this Programme to the goal of sustainable development. The Secretary-General would also be invited to report to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the resolution by the various United Nations entities, with a view to its being considered as an agenda item.

I am most confident that the noble intentions of this draft resolution do not in any way detract from the profound objectives of the United Nations regarding the promotion of sustainable development and the enhancement of the human condition. I therefore would count on the support, and I dare say the unanimous support, of the members of this Assembly for this important initiative of the World Solar Commission, and I take this opportunity to make an earnest appeal for substantial sponsorship of the draft resolution, which we hope will be adopted without a vote.

Finally, I am advised by the Secretariat that action on the draft resolution now before the General Assembly, which has just been distributed this morning can only be taken tomorrow, in order to allow all delegations the opportunity to read it. But if all delegations have indeed read it and have no objection to it, my delegation would be pleased if that rule were waived and action were taken this morning on the draft resolution.

Mr. Khan (India): May we compliment the representative of the Chairman of the World Solar Commission, the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe, for his statement, with which we fully associate ourselves, and for his introduction of the draft resolution on this crucial agenda item.

India is one of the few countries to have initiated research and development with a view to harnessing new and renewable energy sources, even before the energy crisis of 1973. As a result of sustained efforts since then, a substantial research and development and manufacturing sector has emerged in the country for the design and production of non-conventional energy supply equipment.

We also have one of the world's largest programmes for renewable energy. To give but a few examples, India now generates more than 900 megawatts from wind energy, nearly 141 megawatts from small hydroelectric generating plants, over 83 megawatts from biomass and more than 28 megawatts per installed square kilometre from solar photovoltaic systems. In addition, we have installed nearly 1 million solar water heating systems and solar cookers, which decrease pollution and bring nutritional benefits.

India receives solar energy equivalent to 20 megawatts per square kilometre of its surface area and is committed to progressively increasing the production and utilization of new and renewable sources of energy, especially solar energy. At present, solar energy is being utilized through both routes available, namely the solar thermal route and the solar photovoltaic route. We are using solar thermal devices for heating water, cooking, drying, water desalination, refrigeration processes, industrial process heating and steam generation for industrial use, including generation of electricity. By utilizing solar concentrators and properly designed receivers we have been able to achieve steam temperatures of up to 1,000 degrees centigrade. Indigenously developed solar water heaters of capacities ranging from 50 litres to 240,000 litres per day have been installed for domestic, commercial and industrial applications.

Solar photovoltaic cells have emerged as a useful power source not only for lighting, pumping of underground water and telecommunications, but also as power plants for meeting the entire electricity needs of isolated villages, hospitals or lodges. Based on single-crystal solar cells made of silicon, several types of these devices are now being deployed in India. These include solar lanterns, domestic lights, street lights, community lighting systems, power for telecommunications equipment installed on our offshore oil exploration and mining platforms, rural telephone systems and the like.

Energy-deprived populations mostly live in rural and remote areas, where extending national power grids would be prohibitively expensive both in financial and energy terms. Solar photovoltaic power is inducing a powerful revolution in such areas. On Sagar Island, in our province of West Bengal, a 26-kilowatt solar photovoltaic plant is meeting the entire electricity needs of all 300 homes. Similar initiatives are being pursued in villages in southern India.

Over the last few years, India has placed increasing emphasis on producing grid-quality power through the solar photovoltaic route. Two 100-kilowatt grid-interactive power plants have been established in the province of Uttar Pradesh. The private sector has been fully involved in these projects, and a 100-kilowatt power generation system has been installed and is being operated in Maharashtra by a private Indian company. Several companies in the private sector have also installed captive solar photovoltaic power plants.

Significant incentives are being extended by the Government to the private sector and individual citizens in order to promote the use of solar energy through a separate financing agency, the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency. Solar energy equipment shops known as "Aditya" are being established in major cities and towns, in collaboration with manufacturers' associations and non-governmental organizations.

At the same time, market orientation is being imparted to make renewable energy programmes commercially viable and sustainable. To that end, limited budgetary funds are used only for selected demonstration projects.

It is therefore natural that India has been a member of the World Solar Commission since its inception in 1994, under the chairmanship of President Robert Mugabe, and has actively participated in the World Solar Summit process. The personal representative of the Prime Minister of India attended the World Solar Summit in Harare on 16 and 17 September 1996. Subsequently, India also participated in the second meeting of the World Solar Commission, which approved the World Solar Programme for the decade 1996-2005. Under the Programme, we will be implementing eight projects, including those of research and development, institutional improvement, capacity-building, the generation of grid-quality power from solar energy, the decentralized use of renewable energy, and the construction of a 200-kilowatt solar power plant at Leh and another 100-kilowatt solar power plant at Nyomo.

In the spirit of South-South cooperation, India has been willing to share its developmental experience and expertise with other developing countries. It is the coordinator of the solar energy applications project of the Group of Fifteen developing nations and has been promoting increased use of new and renewable sources of energy through its Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme.

We are convinced that fulfilling basic human needs and improving the quality of life are the main objectives of any developmental process. Energy is an essential component of economic and social growth. It is therefore a matter of serious concern that nearly 40 per cent of the world's people have an inadequate energy supply for their daily needs. Support for and promotion of efforts to redress this inequitable and untenable situation must remain one of the priorities of the international community. We therefore commend the draft resolution submitted by Zimbabwe, which we have co-sponsored, for adoption by the Assembly.

Mr. Salleh (Malaysia): My delegation wishes to make a statement in support of the draft resolution on the World Solar Programme 1996-2005, which was introduced by the delegation of Zimbabwe. The Prime Minister of Malaysia, The Honourable Dato' Seri Mahathir Mohamad, is a member of the World Solar Commission and participated in the World Solar Summit held in Harare in September 1996. The World Solar Programme 1996-2005 was launched during that Summit. Malaysia fully endorses the Programme, the text of which is annexed to document A/53/395.

The World Solar Programme 1996-2005 embodies an important step forward in encouraging the wider use of all forms of renewable energy. The Programme has been conceived as a concrete follow-up to the recommendations of the Rio Earth Summit. It provides a comprehensive basis for an important plan to sensitize Governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, financial institutions, the private sector, academia and others concerned on the need to support the development and utilization of renewable energy for sustainable development.

My delegation would like to express Malaysia's sincere appreciation to the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Mr. Robert Mugabe, for his able leadership of the World Solar Commission and his wisdom in guiding the preparation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005. We also extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and others concerned for their important and substantial contributions in the preparation of the Programme.

Energy is a fundamental factor in the socio-economic development process of nations, and in particular in the industrialization process of developing

countries. The growth in current patterns of energy demand is expected to continue well into the next decade. About three quarters of the world's energy demand is now being met by fossil fuels. Given the current proportion of fossil fuels consumed and the rapid growth patterns of energy demand, there is an urgent need to place in perspective a worldwide sustainable energy system.

Fossil fuels, the traditional primary energy sources, will unavoidably be depleted in the long run. It is therefore important that attention be paid to other sources, in particular renewable sources which would not only meet future needs but also sustain development for future generations. Solar energy can help meet those needs. This issue must be seen within the context of the protection and preservation of the global environment, cost effectiveness, the widely available option of conventional sources of energy and the more intelligent and efficient use of energy in order to foster continuing socio-economic growth.

Spreading the sources of energy must also be considered and appreciated as basic to the development process of many countries. Questions relating to the equitable balance of growth, equal access to amenities, national well-being and socio-economic stability depend on a wise and strategic approach to these important issues of energy supply. To some marginalized communities, to those in remote locations and to those not within the range of a national grid, the issue of providing other possible sources of energy becomes not only relevant, but crucial for their socio-economic uplift. The broader use of solar energy and other renewable energy sources, especially in the electrification of rural areas and the production of clean drinking water, will be an impetus towards the creation of a better quality of life for rural and remote communities in the developing countries.

Malaysia believes that in implementing the World Solar Programme 1996-2005, the international community must embark upon a strategic approach based on the concerted effort of all nations. There has to be a fair distribution of responsibilities between both the developed and the developing nations. There has to be adequate transfer of technology. Those who already possess or have benefited from the relevant technologies should consider it their moral and social obligation to participate in and contribute to the process of sharing and transferring. The developed countries, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and intergovernmental bodies which have the resources, knowledge and experience can provide the necessary assistance. Solar energy technologies, for instance, need to be transferred to the developing countries with minimum cost and hindrance, and with intellectual rights being part and parcel of the technology transfer. Additionally, the critical factor of funding must be given due consideration.

My delegation regards the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 as adding a significant contribution to the efforts aimed at promoting sustainable development and the further implementation of Agenda 21. It is therefore important that all concerned should participate to the fullest extent possible in the implementation of the Programme. My delegation is of the view that the Programme should be given due consideration during the deliberations on energy at the forthcoming ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to advance the movement towards sustainable patterns of production, distribution and use of energy.

In conclusion, my delegation sincerely hopes that the draft resolution will find the consensus of all members of the Assembly.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): As a member of the World Solar Commission, Senegal fully supports the statement made by the representative of Zimbabwe under the item on the World Solar Programme 1996-2005. The great diversity of countries that make up the membership of the Commission is a clear reflection of the consensus on the essential role that this important source of energy could play in improving the quality of life of peoples. This consensus has been reinforced by the inclusion of this important item on the agenda of our Assembly.

Following in the wake of the United Nations conference on solar energy held in Namibia in 1981, the World Solar Summit was held in Harare in 1996, under the chairmanship of President Mugabe and with the participation of the Prime Minister of Senegal. The Summit outlined a coherent set of priorities that are the cornerstones of the World Solar Programme for the decade 1996-2005.

These objectives are oriented towards the electrification of rural areas; education and training in solar energy technology; sensitizing decision makers and the public at large about the potential of renewable sources of energy; desalination and water purification; and the transfer of ecologically rational technologies.

The Harare Declaration in support of the Programme stresses, *inter alia*, the many advantages of

using solar energy strictly from the point of view of electrification, as well as because of the economic benefits related to poverty reduction through the promotion of income-generating activities, in particular in isolated rural areas.

Moreover, the harnessing of this great source of energy is significantly helping preserve the environment by greatly reducing harmful effects such as industrial pollution and deforestation.

In this way, the objectives and plan of action of the World Solar Programme are well-harmonized with the efforts of the international community to bring about sustainable development based on economic and social progress and the preservation of the environment. Thus, the Programme may be seen as an attempt to give shape to the commitments of the Rio Earth Summit, in particular of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

These are just some of the reasons for Senegal's support and special interest in the World Solar Programme.

We are grateful to the United Nations agencies and other partners for their support of the Programme.

We hope that the adoption of the draft resolution, of which my country is a sponsor, will be the beginning of a true world partnership in which all of our countries pool their efforts for the triumph of a cause which, after all, reflects the noble ideals of the Charter: "to promote social progress and better standards of life" for all peoples.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe on agenda item 158, entitled "World Solar Programme 1996-2005" and thanks him for the introduction of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.8.

As a member of the World Solar Commission, Jamaica actively participated in the preparatory process which has resulted in the definition of the Programme before us.

I take this opportunity to convey Jamaica's appreciation to the Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, for his effective and inspired leadership of our work since the World Solar Summit in 1996. May I also express Jamaica's appreciation to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for its significant contribution to the development of the Programme.

The World Solar Programme offers a dynamic framework for the promotion of widespread use of solar and other renewable energy sources on a global scale. It represents a concrete follow-up to the recommendations of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development regarding the use of energy sources for sustainable development. The Programme was also formally adopted within the framework of the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, in June 1997.

Jamaica has increasingly incorporated within its sustainable development strategy a sustainable energy policy, acknowledging the integral role which energy must play in promoting economic development.

We are committed to ensuring access by our entire population to viable sources of energy. Diversification of Jamaica's energy base remains a central goal of our energy policy and part of the wider strategy for sustainable energy use. Within this wider strategy, special attention has been given to the development of solar energy, with a view to assessing its viability as a valid alternative source of energy for the medium and long term.

The programme for the development of solar energy use in Jamaica includes the expanded use of solar water heaters for both domestic and industrial use, with a view to eventual reduction of dependence on expensive fossil fuels. It also includes the use of solar technology in industry, such as in the solar crop-drying process used in the processing of vegetables, timber and fruit. Such projects expand industry and employment opportunities in rural, agricultural areas. It includes as well the introduction of solar lighting or photovoltaic systems for rural electrification programmes. This is a particularly important effort which will facilitate the electrification of remote villages where servicing with traditional electric power lines has proved difficult.

Jamaica fully endorses the commitments and bases for action articulated in the World Solar Programme, as detailed in document A/53/395. We endorse in particular the effort to accord priority attention to attracting private capital investment in the development of solar and other alternative energy systems. We are committed to the

effort to accelerate rural development through the harnessing of renewable energy sources and strongly support the call for investment in research and development in renewable energy sources and for training in the application and maintenance of these technologies, with emphasis on community involvement.

We wish to underscore the need for technical assistance and financing for renewable energy initiatives. We therefore call on the international community to support in particular the global, regional and national renewable energy projects listed in the World Solar Programme. These projects have been identified by Governments as deserving the highest priority for implementation.

Jamaica offers its unreserved support to the World Solar Programme and, accordingly, has joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/53/L.8 and commends it to the General Assembly for adoption by consensus.

Mr. Moushoutas (Cyprus): In spite of the calamity, human and economic, that befell my country in 1974, the people of Cyprus, through their indomitable spirit of survival and their hard work, have managed to lift the standard of living of our people to admirable levels. One of the sources of sustainable development used by our Government and our people was and is the utilization of the sunlight that blesses our island 360 days a year. Cyprus is not endowed with indigenous sources of fossil fuels. With the notable exception of solar energy, the utilization of which accounts for 4 per cent of Cyprus's primary energy consumption, the rest of the energy required to meet its energy needs is imported. Consequently, the country is totally dependent on imported energy, primarily crude oil and refined products.

Deployment of renewable energy sources is one of the priorities of Cyprus's energy policy, which has the goal of limiting energy importation. In fact, alternative forms of energy are being used on a practical basis by Cypriots for their daily needs. Windmills have been used extensively in the past for pumping water from wells, mostly for irrigation purposes. Solar water heaters are being used for meeting domestic hot water needs. The awareness of Cypriots of the use of renewable energy sources is reflected in the fact that Cyprus is a leading country — indeed, the leading country in the world — in installed solar collectors.

Solar heaters have been used in Cyprus since 1960. Ambitious manufacturers have managed to adapt the technology of solar heaters to local conditions. Today, more than 90 per cent of dwellings in Cyprus are equipped with solar heaters. A laboratory was established by the Government in 1980 to provide technical assistance to the manufacturers of solar heaters. After the 1980s, when the second generation of solar collectors penetrated the Cypriot market, hotels began to use solar energy for heating water and swimming pools. Currently, more than 50 per cent of hotels are equipped with solar collection systems.

Solar energy is used in Cyprus in other, non-thermal, applications, for instance powering telecommunication receivers and transmitters in remote areas where the electricity grid does not reach. Furthermore, the Cypriot Telecommunication Authority has installed solar cells in telephone kiosks which are not easily accessible by the electricity grid. Further, solar energy utilization in Cyprus is being pursued both by the private sector and by the Government authorities. Towards that end, research and adaptation work is being carried out in fields such as solar cooling and heating, solar desalination and further deployment of photovoltaic systems. It is estimated that the contribution of solar energy to the national energy balance will double in the next 10 years.

Within the context of the policy for the further exploitation of renewable energy sources, the Electricity Authority of Cyprus has taken the decision to purchase electricity produced from alternative sources and fuels at a higher price than it would cost the Authority to produce it. This measure is considered to be a milestone for sustainable development and for the promotion of solar energy for the production of electricity.

My Government is willing to share our experience and expertise on this issue with other interested developing countries.

Cyprus expresses its deep appreciation to Zimbabwe for its important initiative and for hosting the World Solar Summit. We lend our full support to the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 and are pleased to be among the sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.8, which, we hope, will be adopted without a vote.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. I should like to inform members that the General Assembly will take action on draft resolution A/53/L.8 tomorrow morning in order to allow consultations to be concluded.

Agenda item 159

Observer status for the Association of Caribbean States in the General Assembly

Draft resolution (A/53/L.3)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Guatemala to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.3.

Mr. Estévez López (Guatemala) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is my honour on behalf of its 32 sponsors to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.3, entitled "Observer status for the Association of Caribbean States in the General Assembly".

Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The original sponsors of this draft resolution are the 25 member States of the Association — all of which belong the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States — as well as France, an associate member, and the Netherlands, which participates as an observer in the activities of the Association that are of particular interest to it. The members of the Association are extremely grateful to France and to the Netherlands for their sponsorship. They are also grateful to the most recent sponsors of the draft resolution, namely, Bangladesh, Canada, India, Italy and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Three of those States — Canada, India and Italy — have observer status in the Association.

In decision 49/426 of December 1994, the General Assembly recognized the appropriateness of granting observer status in the Assembly to,

> "those intergovernmental organizations whose activities cover matters of interest to the Assembly".

The explanatory memorandum that is annexed to document A/53/143, which was presented to the Assembly last July, outlined the reasons why the activities of the Association of Caribbean States, an intergovernmental organization, fully meet this criterion. That memorandum also indicated that the adoption of the draft resolution included in document A/53/143 as annex II, which I am honoured to introduce today, would be beneficial to the Association and therefore to the Assembly, which promotes goals that coincide largely with those of the Association.

In fact, the Convention Establishing the Association of Caribbean States, which entered into force on 4 August 1995, states in article III, paragraph 1:

> "The Association is an organisation for consultation, cooperation and concerted action, whose purpose is to identify and promote the implementation of policies and programmes designed to:
>
> (a) harness, utilise and develop the collective capabilities of the Caribbean Region to achieve sustained cultural, economic, social, scientific and technological advancement;
>
> (b) develop the potential of the Caribbean Sea through interaction among Member States and with third parties;
>
> (c) promote an enhanced economic space for trade and investment with opportunities for cooperation and concerted action, in order to increase the benefits which accrue to the peoples of the Caribbean from their resources and assets, including the Caribbean Sea;
>
> (d) establish, consolidate and augment, as appropriate, institutional structures and cooperative arrangements responsive to the various cultural identities, developmental needs and normative systems within the region."

For all these reasons, it seems to us that it would be excessive and unnecessary for us to try the patience of the Assembly by dwelling further on the appropriateness of the Assembly's adopting the draft resolution before us. I will add, however, that the draft resolution is self-explanatory and that its operative part is identical to those of earlier resolutions through which the General Assembly granted observer status to other intergovernmental organizations.

I will therefore conclude by expressing the hope that the draft resolution will be adopted without a vote. I would also like to express the appreciation of its sponsors to all the members that support it.

Mr. Singh (India): I deem it an honour to speak on the agenda item concerning the granting of observer status to the Association of Caribbean States in the General Assembly.

Relations between India and the countries of the Caribbean region go well back into history. Strengthened by a shared historical and cultural experience, these relations are poised for a new level of development, reflecting the common aspirations of our countries and peoples.

I had the privilege of visiting some countries of the region in 1991 as Minister of State for External Affairs. The warmth of the people and the extensive potentialities for intensified cooperation between India and the Caribbean countries that I observed during that visit left an indelible impression on me. My presence here today in many ways reflects this personal attachment.

India enjoys extensive and wide-ranging bilateral cooperation with all countries of the Association of Caribbean States. We have therefore maintained close links with it since its establishment on 4 August 1995. As an observer, we have regularly participated in its meetings and are in the process of formalizing an agreement for cooperation with its member countries through the Association, in addition to bilateral cooperation agreements. We look forward, through that agreement, to an opportunity to share and to assist, but also to learn.

We have been distressed by the havoc wrought by hurricane Georges on some of the countries of the Association of Caribbean States. We have provided some immediate assistance and will endeavour to do more through the provision of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies. We trust that with the support of the international community, those countries that have borne the brunt of hurricane Georges will soon recover.

The aims of the Association of Caribbean States, which seeks to utilize the potential of the region for the economic and social development of all its constituents, are exemplary. India, along with other countries of our region, has been engaged in a similar venture in the context of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. We view the regional organizations as the building blocks of a new compact of South-South cooperation for the economic prosperity and social welfare of all.

We are convinced that greater cooperation between the Association of Caribbean States and the United Nations would be beneficial to all Member States, enabling us to share each other's experience and enlarge our mutually beneficial cooperation. We are conscious of the enormous capacities available in the Caribbean countries. The granting of observer status to the Association would no doubt lead to a rewarding relationship. We therefore commend the draft resolution submitted by Guatemala for adoption by the Assembly.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): Italy is very glad to co-sponsor the draft resolution aimed at granting observer status in the General Assembly to the Association of Caribbean States. Through this draft resolution the international community will show once again its awareness of the characteristics and special needs of the Caribbean States; it will express its appreciation for their extremely valuable role; and it will help foster an even closer relationship between them and the United Nations.

My country is proud of the excellent relations it enjoys with all of the Caribbean countries. In concrete terms, we are engaged in numerous initiatives of economic, technical and financial cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral. The closeness between Italy and the Caribbean States stems from the geographic, environmental and historical characteristics that we share. The Italian people, who live in a land with almost 5,000 kilometres of coastline and countless islands and archipelagos, are no strangers to the problems and difficulties faced by small island and coastal States, including, of course, natural disasters.

Having common problems also means that we have many ideas and experiences and a great deal of know-how and expertise to share in helping each other. This is one of the main reasons why Italy has actively promoted cooperation and partnership with the Alliance of Small Island States since its very inception. I wish to underline that we have contributed with deeds, and not simply with words, to the follow-up of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, in line with the historic Barbados Declaration of 1994. The international community as a whole should share and take stock of the invaluable experience that the small island States have accrued in many sectors.

This year my country, Italy, became the fifth largest contributor to the United Nations regular budget, reflecting its new position as the fifth largest producer of wealth in the world. Many Italian companies are involved in the building or management of high-quality tourist structures, cruise ship services and air transportation in the Caribbean. Last but not least, more and more Italian tourists are attracted by the extraordinary, exotic beauty of these lands and by the unique kindness and warm hospitality of their peoples.

Italy, which has long-standing ties of friendship and culture with the Caribbean States, will continue to follow this area with great attention and will continue to be as — if not more — supportive of its needs in the future as it has been in the past.

Here at the United Nations in particular, our friendship has also developed through common battles — battles we have fought together for democracy and against privilege, for transparency and against closed doors, for participation and against exclusion.

In conclusion, Italy welcomes the developments of the past three years, which have strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Caribbean States. This is a particularly successful example of collaboration with a regional organization and an exemplary partnership which now fully deserves proper recognition and appreciation by the General Assembly.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Caribbean is a cultural, political and economic entity of which my country is a part for reasons both constitutional and historical. These reasons orient Colombia's foreign policy towards the goal of integration and give it a fundamental interest in the development of relations with the countries of the Caribbean basin.

Colombia believes in the strengthening of the Association of Caribbean States as a body for economic integration and political coordination that ensures the balanced social and cultural development of our peoples. In this respect, the Association of Caribbean States has proved to be one of the best instruments for promoting the implementation of policies geared towards developing the collective capabilities of the Caribbean to achieve sustained social, cultural, economic, scientific and technological progress in the region.

Colombia has maintained a proactive and consistent policy in all of the Association's Committees, in particular in the Committee on Budget and Administration and also in the Committee on Trade Development and External Relations, which it chairs.

My country is the depositary State for ratifications of the agreement establishing the Association, which was signed in Cartagena de Indias in July 1994. Colombia also had the privilege of hosting the third meeting of the Association's Ministerial Council, held in November 1997, also in Cartagena, whose outcome included the approval of a plan for a tourism zone in the Caribbean, which we welcome and which will be taken up at the next ministerial meeting.

We have been involved with the Association since the process of defining its scope began, and we have made every effort to promote its institutional development. That is why we support the participation, with observer status, of the Association of Caribbean States in the framework of the United Nations.

We are convinced that in addition to strengthening dialogue among our States, the Association itself will gain new vigour as a mechanism for political cooperation. Such a mechanism is vitally needed to represent the common interests of our region at the international level and to work more closely with the United Nations system towards the shared goal of developing programmes to improve the standard of living of the countries of the region.

My country is pleased to support, and is co-sponsoring, the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.3 on the granting of observer status to the Association of Caribbean States in the General Assembly, which was introduced today by the delegation of Guatemala.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): Created in August 1995, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) is, by comparison with other regional institutions, a relatively new forum. Despite its brief existence, however, it has already demonstrated its great potential for promoting consultation, cooperation and concerted action among its membership to develop the countries and peoples that it represents.

The Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action which were agreed upon at the Association's first summit meeting held three years ago in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, identified three main sectors of cooperation, namely, trade, tourism and transport. In so doing, our leaders hoped to explore more fully the abundant resources of the Caribbean Sea, a sea that separates us geographically but at the same time joins us together through a common history, culture and interests.

Over the years we in the Caribbean have learned to appreciate the benefits of working together to maximize our strength and to fulfil our shared aspirations. As part of a widening network of agencies, the ACS has created expanded opportunities for our States to engage in functional cooperation. In addition to the three T's —

trade, tourism and transport — the Association also serves to intensify our efforts in such vital fields as education, health, the environment and natural-disaster preparedness.

To achieve its full potential, however, the Association of Caribbean States must be drawn into cooperation with the wider United Nations system. As provided for in Chapter VIII of the Charter, the symbiotic relationship between the world Organization and regional arrangements can boost the efficiency and effectiveness of international programmes. The record has shown that, with proper coordination, partnerships among complementary organizations can be of considerable advantage for all participants and all States.

Persuaded of this mutual benefit, the Caribbean Community States, which constitute 14 of the 25 members of the ACS, wish to fully support the Association's request for observer status in this Assembly. On their behalf, therefore, I would like to join others who have spoken this morning to urge the unanimous adoption of draft resolution A/53/L.3 as a first step towards the proposed partnership.

Mr. Dausá Céspedes (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is an honour for me to address the Assembly in support of the draft resolution on granting observer status for the Association of Caribbean States in the General Assembly.

We are addressing this issue because of the links of friendship and solidarity that have historically tied the people of Cuba to the peoples of the Association of Caribbean States. The establishment of the Association of Caribbean States was not only a historic event for its member States but also a milestone for all of us who, with legitimate pride, predicted that this would be a great success in the process of regional integration to which we are all committed. Important international conferences on cooperation for development, sustainable development and trade and development have enjoyed the invaluable participation and support of the member countries of the Association.

Cuba feels honoured to participate in this debate. We are convinced that the Association of Caribbean States can and must contribute to the multilateral debate and to the progress of the United Nations. My country has an active presence and a high degree of interest in all the processes and negotiations taking place within the framework of the Association. Cuba has been honoured to organize a number of meetings of the Association of Caribbean States.

For many reasons, as sacred and long-lived as our shared roots, Cuba supports this draft resolution. We are convinced — because we have seen proof — that the spirit that unites the Association of Caribbean States will undoubtedly contribute to our shared progress in the quest for future peace, justice and well-being for all the peoples of the world.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.3

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/53/L.3 was adopted (resolution 53/5).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 159?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 162

Observer status for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in the General Assembly

Draft resolution (A/53/L.4)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Poland to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.4.

Mr. Kozlowski (Poland): I am honoured to address the General Assembly today on behalf of all 29 members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). I would also like to inform the Assembly that I have just learned that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has joined the sponsors of this draft resolution.

It is also my great personal honour and privilege here to represent Poland, one of the newest members of the OECD.

The OECD is an international intergovernmental organization established by a 1960 Convention and based in Paris. It comprises countries that share the values of an open-market economy, democracy and respect for human rights. Although it is not a universal body, it has developed a global scope and outlook. It is essentially a forum for policy debate, sharing experiences, discussing problems, designing appropriate solutions and appraising outcomes for the short and medium term. The OECD's standards of excellence are well-reflected in the statistical, economic and social data and publications it steadily makes available to all interested parties.

The OECD has three principal aims which are spelt out unambiguously in its Convention. The first aim is to achieve the highest sustainable economic growth and employment and a rising standard of living in member countries, while maintaining financial stability, and thus to contribute to the development of the world economy. The second aim is to contribute to sound economic expansion in member as well as non-member countries in the process of economic development. Thirdly, the OECD seeks to contribute to the expansion of world trade on a multilateral, non-discriminatory basis in accordance with international obligations.

These aims are to the fullest extent compatible with the principal goals of the United Nations. They clearly confirm that both the United Nations and the OECD have a common agenda and may benefit from establishing a closer relationship.

The OECD covers most areas of government activity. The issues it deals with include economics, finance, statistics, fiscal and enterprise affairs, trade, energy, transport, environment, development cooperation, education, employment, labour and social affairs, science, technology and industry, food, agriculture and fisheries, public management and territorial development. The OECD carries out its work through some 200 specialized bodies assisted by an international secretariat of about 1,900 staff.

In addition, the OECD system encompasses a number of semi-autonomous bodies, including the Nuclear Energy Agency, the International Energy Agency, the European Conference of Ministers of Transport, the Development Centre, the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, and the Club du Sahel.

The OECD is an innovative organization, constantly adapting to emerging needs and requirements. Addressing issues across disciplines and countries, the OECD is now focusing its attention on such central themes as balancing macroeconomic and structural policies, ageing populations, sustainable development, combating bribery and corruption, corporate governance, electronic commerce, employment, education and training, taxation, trade and quality regulations. All these themes are relevant to economic growth and prosperity for the future.

Like its programme of work, the membership of the OECD has been continuously evolving over the years, thereby responding to new challenges and reflecting changes in international relations. Since 1994, Mexico, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Republic of Korea have joined the organization, opening it up to the perceptions, influences and interests of new members.

Over the years, the OECD has also developed stronger ties with non-members, especially with those representing the so-called emerging and transition markets in different regions. This has been carried out through a range of thematic and country activities. Thanks to OECD's outreach programme, a number of non-member countries participate as observers in the work of specific OECD bodies. The OECD Development Centre and Development Assistance Committee provide possibilities for policy dialogue and analysis of development issues, in cooperation with a number of interested developing countries. The recent meeting of Secretary-General Kofi Annan with the OECD Development Assistance Committee, which was devoted to the problems of Africa, clearly demonstrated OECD's commitment to the cause of peace and prosperity in that continent, as well as its support for the Secretary-General's recommendations contained in his landmark report on Africa.

The representatives of United Nations agencies and bodies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Economic Commission for Europe and the International Atomic Energy Agency, are engaged as observers and participants in different meetings of the OECD. Likewise, the OECD enjoys observer status in the Economic and Social Council and UNCTAD. It also takes part in United Nations conferences and conventions on an ad hoc basis.

It is precisely this ad hoc arrangement that no longer seems sufficient, judging by the level of expectations and

potential for cooperation between the two organizations. Hence, there is a need for consolidation of the links between the United Nations and the OECD. A more workable, practical and mutually beneficial arrangement would consist in granting the OECD the status of observer in the General Assembly. This is in essence the rationale for the submission of this draft resolution for adoption by the Assembly. With this in mind, on behalf of the countries members of the OECD and the latest sponsor, I recommend the adoption of draft resolution A/53/L.4, on observer status for the OECD in the General Assembly.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.4.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/53/L.4 was adopted (resolution 53/6).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 162?

It was so decided.

Programme of work

Mr. Mangoaela in the Chair.

The Acting President: I should like to announce a change in the programme of work concerning agenda item 23, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community", as contained in document A/INF/53/3/Add.1. Instead of being taken up on Thursday, 22 October, item 23 will be considered on Thursday, 29 October.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.